



THE CONTINUITY OF REVELATION

Consisting of

PART I.

The Development of the Yahweh Religion

Being the Reproduction (with additions) of a Lecture delivered
before a Theological Conference, in British Columbia,
and published by request

PART II.

Present Day Conditions and the Kingdom of God

Being the Substance of Some Discourses delivered in Fernie, B.C.,
and appearing in the "Christian Guardian" of Toronto,
together with some Observations (originally in-
cluded in a Thesis) on the Christian
Conception of God

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TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1908

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INTRODUCTORY

THE development of Revelation, of which this little volume treats, is one of the most important conceptions of modern theology. It brings the process by which God has revealed Himself to man into touch with human thought, unfolds to us the humanness of the Divine Word, often sheds important light upon its meaning, and brings it home to our everyday experience. We may, therefore, welcome every well-considered effort to bring this line of unfolding or opening up of God's truth before the minds of Bible students in such a way that they may grasp its full significance.

In doing this, however, two points must be carefully guarded.

In the first place, we must be on our guard against the attempt to force this process into a theory of development derived from other sources. Divine revelation had its development, and in that fact accords with all other works of God. But as these works present an infinite variety in the time, order and method of their development, so revelation has its own methods and laws of development, and these very methods present us with some of our strongest proofs of the divinity as well as the naturalness of the process.

In the second place, we must distinguish between the great forward steps of Divine revelation and the slower and often infirm and erring process by which the common human mind has apprehended that revelation. The Biblical record to some extent includes both. Abraham, Moses, Samuel and David, Isaiah, and the return from the captivity indicate epochs in the Old Testament revelation in which men specially endowed and chosen of God were given clearer and far-reaching vision of truth. It does not follow that the whole nation apprehended the fulness of that vision or that it is to be reduced to the level of the understanding of the mass of the chosen people. There are mountain peaks to which prophets went up, there are the lower passes along which the nation climbed. These must not be confused.

This is especially the case at the beginning of Christianity. No mistake could be more serious than to measure the teaching of Christ and His apostles by the imperfect conceptions of the sub-apostolic age. We do not presume to think that after even nineteen hundred years of study we have sounded the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God revealed by Christ, or have equalled, much less exhausted, the understanding of the things of Christ gained by a Paul or a John.

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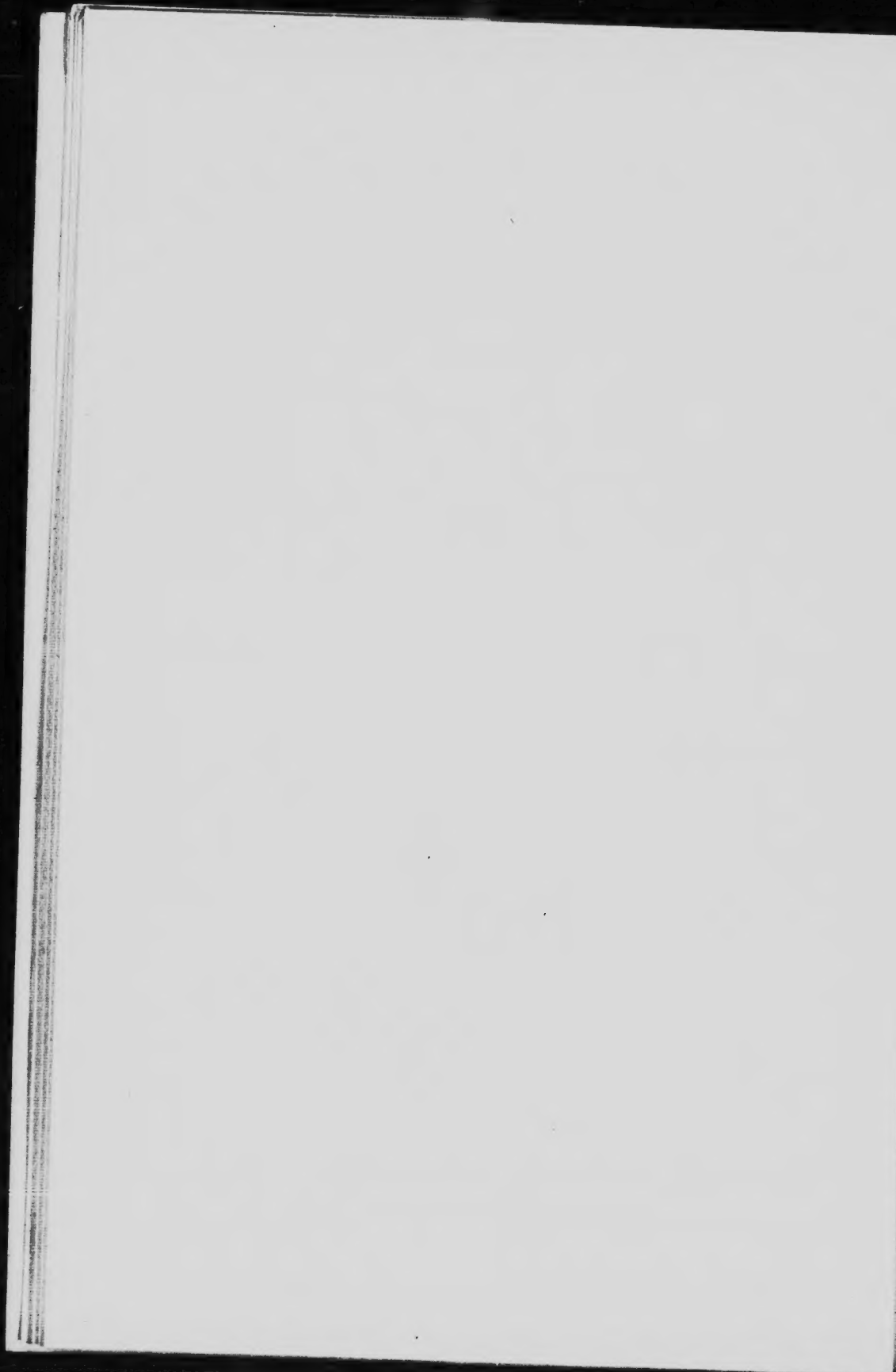
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PART I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YAHWEH RELIGION



The Continuity of Revelation

CHAPTER I.

APPROACH TO SUBJECT.

THE arrangement of books in our bibles, innocent enough in itself, and having much to be said in its favor, on the score of convenience, has inadvertently led to many widespread misconceptions. Take the case with regard to the New Testament, for instance. It is not to be denied that the arrangement which accords first place to the gospels is entirely in the fitness of things; since we require some presentation, however incomplete, of the unique Personality, and the rôle He filled, before we can be in a position to appreciate, or even intelligently follow, the sundry communications of apostles and others to early Christian communities. But, despite of its convenience and propriety, this very arrangement leads, almost inevitably, to the conclusion, in the popular mind, that the gospels precede the epistles, in order of time, and that "revelation" closes with the Apocalypse.

On such a basis, it is evident, any developed doctrine of Christian ideas is out of the question, or could only issue in palpable absurdities, should such be attempted by the unwary. The fact—known to the

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student—that First Thessalonians is not merely the first of the Pauline writings to have come down to us, but also the first, in order of time, of our extant Christian documents, is one which, if rightly apprehended, could not fail to be regarded, in some quarters, as positively startling. For if, to go no further, we can arrange the Pauline writings, it is at once possible to trace the development of Pauline thought; and this done, the conception which makes of revelation a fixed content, something given at one time once for all, immediately falls to the ground. Such order in time, and consequent historical development, in regard to the writings of the New Testament as a whole, is, it need hardly be pointed out, ungainsayable.

And the same thing precisely applies to the books of the Old Testament. For, evident as the case is, on a moment's reflection, it cannot be too frequently stated that the bible is not, in the ordinary sense, a book, but a library, containing many different productions—extending over a vast range of time—bound up, for convenience, between two covers.

As every student knows, it is to the misunderstanding of a forgotten monk, in translating from one classic tongue to another—mistaking a plural for a singular—that we owe the popular misconception of a book. At the time when the monk was engaged in his task, the various writings to which the Christian Church had come to give her imprimatur were classified beyond serious controversy; and the monk's defective linguistic knowledge combined with the unity of revelation which was felt to run through the writings as a whole to determine both the name and the idea of a book. For that is exactly what "bible"

means, the name by which the collective Christian writings have come to be known to English-speaking peoples; connoting the singular concept (book), in place of the plural (books), and so, on the face of it, a misnomer. From this simple and seemingly trivial mistake far-reaching consequences have flowed, in creating the impression of a mechanical unity, as regards the composition of holy writ; obscuring the human element, and obliterating the element of time. If we could arrange the respective writings in something like chronological order, many things would at once become plain which are puzzling at present, and the well-intentioned attempt to clear up which has led, on occasion, to not a little hot dispute.

In the Old Testament, then, as in the New, let it be frankly recognized, the order of books as we have them has been determined from quite other considerations than questions of chronology. The order followed in our English bibles, and the various translations, it may be worth while to mention in passing, is not identical with that in the original, although the same writings, practically speaking, come first throughout. If, therefore, there is acknowledged fitness in the gospels having first place, in the New Testament, on the score of subject matter, there is equal fitness in the Book of Beginnings coming at the head of the Old Testament, and serving as a common introduction to the sacred writings of Jews and Christians both. So soon, however, as a chronological arrangement is attempted, the human element immediately emerges, and imparts to the Book of Books a characteristic humanness which is as illuminating as it is refreshing, carrying its own significance

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to succeeding generations of men, a fount of inspiration impossible to exhaust. The bible is now no longer a production apart from the process of human thought, but is brought close to the living thought processes of to-day; not a book written to order, mechanically, but a literature—the living expression of the religious consciousness of a race uniquely endowed, and uniquely privileged in its religious experiences.

As to when the several writings were compiled and how they were compiled, it is not our province to discuss. Sufficient to say that these matters will be found treated in works specially written for the purpose. All that concerns us here to note is that the element of time enters, of necessity, into their composition; that the various writings were written on various occasions, for various reasons, by various men. Chronological sequence, not the biblical order of books, is the great desideratum we must keep before us. This is absolutely indispensable as a prerequisite to the inquiry in hand; since only in this way can we secure perspective, or place ourselves in a position to trace any development in the doctrine of God, or what amounts to the same thing, man's knowledge of Him.

One other consideration requires due prominence. In reading writings of a past time, it is natural, and in some ways unavoidable, to carry with us, and carry over, ideas of a later age, and thus unconsciously to read later ideas into earlier times. One outstanding illustration of this in the domain of bible truth is often overlooked. The translators of the LXX, when they completed their labors, had an enormous influence, not only in shaping current Jewish ideas

both then and at the time of Christ; but, through Hebrew scriptures passing over to the Christian Church, in determining also earlier and later Christian conceptions of Old Testament ideas. Fuller reference to this important fact, and its bearings, will be found in the proper place. Here it only requires to make plain that in seeking to trace the genetic development of theistic ideas, as disclosed in Hebrew scriptures, we must hold ourselves ready to lay aside any preconceived ideas of our own. The reason for this is self-evident. There can be little likelihood else of accomplishing our object. It is eminently irrational, not to say pathetically grotesque, to read highly developed Christian ideas into times which could not be other than religiously immature, and which it would not be wrong to characterise as in some respects actually barbaric.

No claim is laid, or could be laid, to originality in the following pages. A much humbler rôle is that essayed. All that this little book, in the main, aims to be, in its limited scope, as respects Part I., is a simple primer, or rather handy sketch, bringing together in convenient form familiar data in such a way as to render them self-interpretative. In this respect the presentation by the writer is entirely his own. What is there written is, in substance, the reproduction of a lecture given before a theological gathering in British Columbia, and which, expanded and amended, has been recast in response to many requests for publication.

It might be thought that the development should have been traced into the Christian era, inasmuch as the present presentation is incomplete. This, no

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doubt, is true. In one sense the line of development reaches its culmination and goal in the sacred Person of Jesus. In another sense, it goes right on, and appears in the whole subsequent course of Christian thought. For the coming of Christ constitutes a new and vital factor in the mediation of revelation, not only for contemporary times and the immediate circle of disciples, but as regards all later apprehensions of the divine in the religious consciousness of men. It is this unceasing development, indeed, from first to last, which constitutes at one and the same time the unity and continuity of revelation. But the attempt to follow the development further—outside of a few additional comments at the close—would carry us quite beyond the original limitations imposed.

The writer cannot refrain, however, from supplementing Part I. with the substance of some discourses delivered in part on his present pastoral charge, and embodied in some articles which appeared in the *Christian Guardian*, of Toronto, together with some observations (originally included in a thesis) on the Christian conception of God, so as to make the survey more complete. He does so not only because they deal with matters which, he is persuaded, are not far removed from much that occupied prophetic thought; but because they serve to illustrate what, in his judgment, is the religious approach which ought to obtain in regard to pressing questions of to-day, if we are to maintain the same continuity unfolded alike in the messages of prophets of old and in the evangel of Jesus.

Whether this little work will serve any wider purpose than that originally designed remains to be seen.

Its acknowledged limitations, and elementary character, preclude the need of any extensive show of erudition, to which the writer, indeed, cannot lay claim; and make it also proper, perhaps, to abstain from the customary practice in the citing of authorities. Special mention must, however, be made of at least some half-dozen names to whom the author is greatly and gratefully indebted, on both sides of the sea, to wit, Schultz, Driver, McCurdy, McFadyen, Burwash, D'Arcy, and Bowne, to mention no more.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROCESS OF REVELATION.

REVELATION, in its comprehensive sense of the knowledge of God—God making Himself known throughout the ages—is variously understood, accordingly as we view it as a process or a content, or both; accordingly also as our view is limited to any one phase of the process at any given time, or is directed to the process as a whole.

It may help our approach to the subject, and clear up difficulty as we go along, if at the outset we keep in mind the familiar phenomenon of the flowing river, ever flowing, ever changing, yet always preserving its continuity. The constant flow and change is no wise felt to nullify the river's existence, or stultify our conception, but forms part of the idea of continuity.

Another viewpoint, totally differing from that of the river, is furnished by the cross section of a tree. Here it is the idea of fixity which is presented, in contrast with that of flow. Not that in the actual cross section we stop all change and secure absolute fixity. Sap no longer flows as it did, to be sure, but change goes on. We speak of having interrupted its course, when all we have done has been to turn it in a new direction, without breaking the continuity. Chemical change continues when vital changes cease; and constant change is going on in the cross section of a tree

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which has all the appearance of fixity, as in the uncut tree still lifting its head to the skies. But to ordinary observation the cross section presents the appearance of fixity: and this appearance of fixity gives us what is called the static or stationary view of things, in contradistinction to that which is dynamic or panoramic.

The static view, it cannot be denied, is, in its aid to human thinking, indispensable in ordinary life. We cannot get on without it. Moreover, constituted as we are, we are compelled to it, by ordinary conditions of thought; since in all our thinkings we must of necessity take cognizance of time and space. But there is a subtle danger in this unavoidable human limitation, unless we are on our guard; we may be led thereby to mistake appearance for fact, a momentary phase for permanent reality. It is just as though we should take an instantaneous photograph of a moving train, and then assume from the picture that the train was really standing still. We are always taking just such instantaneous mental photographs of different aspects of life—and must do so—which are nothing else than a series of static views. This applies to the whole range of human experience, and is as true of the tree as the train. In the case of the tree, which serves for illustration, if instead of actually cutting across the tree, we only do so in imagination, we have the static view without altering things in the least—an instantaneous mental photograph, with all the life processes going on undisturbed. Life never stands still.

Now, suppose we run this cross section right across life, which, as stated, in our ordinary thinkings we do

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as a matter of course, and are compelled to do, without being able to help ourselves. We shall not need to be told that it changes nothing. Life continues to flow on uninterruptedly, in all directions, as before, combining change with continuity. There are no breaks, no moments of pause, and can be none. In our thought, indeed, in any given view of things at any given moment, we arrest the continuous process, and are bound to do so, to get any "view" at all; but there is no arrest in reality. The instantaneous photograph has in no wise stopped the train. Sap still circulates in the tree. The river flows on.

Granted, however, that the static view of things is both indispensable to human thought, and unavoidable, it does not follow that we should fail to recognise the limitations inhering in our knowledge and powers, and be on our guard against illusion. Because in our ordinary outlook on life, whichever way we turn, we are under the mortal necessity, as it were, of taking a continuous series of photographic views, according to time and place and individual personality; we are not thereby also under mortal necessity to mistake the part for the whole, nor to confound the intellectual thought process within with the objective reality without.

Until comparatively recent times, in regard to creation, God was generally thought of as doing a certain piece of work, day by day, finishing each as He went along, and terminating His labors when He had completed the whole. Whether the days were taken literally, or regarded as extended over indefinite periods of time, is of no consequence, since substantially the same idea is involved in either case. This

was the unsophisticated child-thought of unsophisticated man. It came naturally to primitive man to think in this way, in harmony with the every-day necessities of thought; and it comes naturally to men to do so in a more sophisticated age. The fact, however, that Creation is continuous, going on to-day under our own eyes, as in the beginning, if for many a new point of view, difficult at first to take up into their thought, is, nevertheless, on reflection, seen to be indubitable, the actual and absolute truth in the case.

Precisely the same considerations apply to Revelation. It is here that many, doubtless, unwittingly, are led astray. Accustomed in their ordinary thinkings to look on life from the static point of view, without analysing the conditions, it is not to be wondered at if their approach to Revelation is governed by the like naive simplicity engendered by the every-day necessities of every-day thought. For them, Revelation, instead of being, in the nature of things, a continuous process, is broken up into hard and fast stages, marked off from one another by fixed periods of time. This way of looking at things gives us intervals of silence, more or less prolonged, during which it is thought there was no revelation—when there was no open vision, and God's voice was not heard. The silence might even, in popular thought, be prolonged into centuries, as, for instance, in regard to the intervening period supposed to elapse between the close of the Old Testament dispensation and the opening of the New.

We shall, of course, notwithstanding our recognition of the limitations under which we live, continue to view things, as heretofore, under the forms of time

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and space. Such a mode of viewing things is, for mortals, a permanent factor of life; and its helpfulness, for mortal minds, is self-evident. We shall, perforce, continue to take mental pictures of what is going on, moment by moment, although such mental pictures can have validity, within the prescribed limitations, only for the moment, and only for ourselves. And, further, when applied to the highest and holiest things, this poetical and human way of looking at things will continue to win our hearts, as in the ages long gone by. For we are all children, or children of a larger growth, with child-thoughts; and these child-thoughts, common to humanity, will remain to the end. Thus, obviously, the static view is merely the outcome of mortal limitations. All we do in each case is simply to apply the cross section at intervals to accommodate ourselves.

Taking all this for granted—that we are compelled, as we say, to view things statically, to view them, moment by moment, under the limitations of time and space, what then? Within the limitations imposed, we are justified in supposing, such views have force, and hold good, but not beyond; for moment by moment the whole of life, in all its complexity, is changing, in all directions, for each and all. We are not, however, compelled to attribute momentary processes to God. We can even, ourselves, on occasion, pass, in imagination, beyond the limitations. So far as God is concerned, it needs only to be stated to be recognised, that days and periods are entirely human arrangements, for human convenience, a mere thought process inhering in the limitations of the human mind. With God there are no divisions of time, and can be none—

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all is Now; nor of space—all is Here. It may be incumbent on us to use accommodating human language—for we could not, else, express ourselves at all, even with regard to God; but this does not require that we should, in thought, make God a man, or impose our limitations upon Him. Partial, static views of existence are, for us, a necessity; we must keep on taking our instantaneous mental pictures, momentary phases, of the passing process. But for God there is no such necessity; in His thought existence is apprehended as a whole, if, indeed, it is not more correct to say that He Himself constitutes existence.

It is not difficult, then, to see that the view of revelation which accords with reality is, in the nature of the case, not static, but dynamic; not fixed, but moving; not mechanical, but, like all life processes, vital. We can see that the law of continuity obtains, and must obtain, everywhere. We can be assured that God's intercourse with the race never ceases, any more than His connection with the world.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST IDEAS OF GOD.

It goes without saying that there could be no revelation unless there were, or were designed ultimately to be, intelligences to whom the revelation could be made. For, supposing the universe to be but the expression of God, conditioning His existence—the objectifying of His thought—there would still be no one to take account of it. Unless we grant that the making of a universe is an absolute necessity, inhering in the nature of God, conditioning the divine existence, it might be said there would be no purpose in bringing a universe into being except there were intelligences to whom it would be intelligible, *i.e.*, a revelation. For there was no need on the part of God of any revelation to Himself. Creation without such an end in view—revelation to intelligences—would be all the same as to represent God as bringing the world into being simply to amuse Himself—for which, again, it may be said, there was no need.

So far as man is concerned—and, for that matter, so far as we know, all intelligences—revelation can only be mediated, in the last analysis, in and through consciousness. This means the possibility of a growing conception of God in the minds of men. In dealing with a growing revelation of God in terms of human consciousness, we must not be understood as

ignoring the fact of an Eternal Invariable, but as seeking to trace its manifestations in time in the growing thoughts of men. Viewed on the godward side, it is the Infinite unconditioned; viewed on the manward side, it is the Infinite conditioned by the limitations of men. To trace this growing conception of God in the minds of men—the unfolding of the divine idea throughout the ages—must ever be, for mortal beings, an object of surpassing interest, which can never stale or grow old. It may be true that by simply searching men cannot find out God; but human piety, no less than human quest after first causes, will always want to discover marks of the Maker's presence and read His character in His works. In so doing, in seeking to follow the course of the divine manifestations in time, in the experiences of men, it becomes increasingly evident, to the reverent mind, that revelation is a continuous progression. Viewed in its entirety, in its everlasting unfolding, throughout the ages, it appears as one grand, progressive continuity.

How the first clear idea of God came to emerge in human consciousness is a matter, doubtless, of deepest import, which has exercised and will continue to exercise the minds of the greatest. For our purpose it is only necessary to recognise the bare fact that from the dawn of history the idea of God has been present in the minds of men. Its development in prehistoric time is equally incontrovertible. Nor is there any satisfactory explication of the fact, except on the basis of revelation, which assumes both the existence and manifestation of God. The precise mode of origination—the actual process through which the

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divine idea was brought into being in human consciousness—are matters which, no doubt, enter into the very heart of the mystery, but which do not touch the validity of the fact itself, nor lessen its significance for the race. In the collection of sacred writings which have come to be denominated by us specifically as the scriptures, as in other primitive writings, the idea of God is taken for granted. Throughout the whole range of universal history it is the basal presupposition of all thinkings. In some form, it may be safely affirmed, it is common to the race. Or if this precise position is held to require modification, it may be laid down with absolute certainty, and without qualification, that at a given stage in human development the idea of God tends inevitably to appear. The significance of this momentous fact can never be ignored.

With the earlier processes, in the more elementary stages of religious development, we are not concerned, except in passing. Our study takes us to the times when, in the career of a chosen people, the conception of the divine existence has reached a completeness which brings it into an entirely new category, involving consequences which affect, and must affect, eventually, the whole race.

What God means to primitive man, and what God means to us, are conceptions separated by well-nigh infinite diameters of thought. As we see primitive man to-day, we see a being of almost limitless potentialities, with varied capacities, for the most part undeveloped, and with character unformed. He has instinctive beliefs, and is dominated by a crude but awful sense of the mystery of life. He bows himself

in worship before some stock or stone, which he takes to be associated in some way with the Inscrutable Mystery. In this primitive man may be observed, under varying conditions, the divine idea struggling, so to speak, with more or less definiteness into clearness. In his immature religious consciousness we are to recognise the Divine Spirit as working, shaping his first conceptions of God. In other words, in and through his religious consciousness, in all its implications, God is making Himself known. Purification in the conception of God, in man's growing apprehension of the divine, brings with it a more or less corresponding clarification in the conception of sin.

Thus we may in strict truth say, God has ever been revealing Himself to man in and through his instinctive beliefs, according to man's varying capacity to take in the vast idea, and his varying response. Under various forms, sometimes harsh and grotesque, crude and cruel, man has from the beginning been a worshipper of God. Throughout the entire process the religious idea has been struggling up into conscious clearness in his thought. Given time, this idea in all its measureless significance for the race will be found to be capable of a development which, in its earlier stages, would, without actual knowledge of the conditions, have been deemed impossible.

As already stated, God can only be revealed in and through consciousness. Existence has no meaning save for consciousness. There can be no revelation outside consciousness. Human consciousness is of relatively late origin. We are not thereby necessitated to think that there was no revelation of God before the advent of man. For man, it is true, there

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can be no revelation of God until the arrival of human consciousness. But the divine consciousness exists from the beginning; and, associated therewith, before the advent of man, there may well have existed orders of beings capable of God. For them, as for all intelligences, there was a possible revelation in the earliest organisms, as in the whole subsequent development, in ever-ascending scale of increasing complexity, while things were in preparation for the coming of man.

In short, in every stage of the age-long process, there is, of necessity, a partial revelation of God.

Lo, at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
And weave for God the garments thou know'st Him by!

Not only in primitive forms of life is there possible revelation, but in primitive forms of matter, in primitive motion and primitive light.

O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space;
Whose chariots of wrath the deep thunder-clouds form;
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm!

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY SEMITIC IDEAS.

TAKING man as we find him, we find that his conception of God varies with his racial characteristics. This holds good in the particular case under consideration. If Phœnician and Canaanitish nature worship at first have elements in common with early Semitic forms, in due time there comes to be a marked differentiation. With Semitic ideas in general we are not concerned, except so far as they bear on the later Hebrew development. The Semitic conception, as that of the parent stock, is, of necessity, closely related to that of the early Hebrews; and we require to keep this before us in tracing the later development. Assyriology here comes to our aid with illuminating presentations of the early Semitic *régime* as far back as three and four thousand years before Christ. On this account, ancient inscriptions are an indispensable commentary, both in determining early Semitic ideas and making plain the intricacies of early Hebrew thought.

Accepting as our guide to the inner workings of the ancient Hebrew mind the incomparable treasury of religious literature—rightly regarded as inspired—which we have in our bibles, we must also meet, as far as may be, the claims of historical sequence. This is not as formidable as at first sight it would seem, thanks to the labors of generations of research, on the

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part of scholars in various fields, who, with untiring devotion and unremitting zeal have given their lives to this very thing. Our part is to avail ourselves of their services as far as they serve our purpose. In doing so we shall, of course, be compelled to leave behind popular conceptions in popular methods of reading the bible. One can understand the objection to this which may be felt in some quarters, because of supposed issues involved: but the objection is based on a complete misunderstanding. It is quite certain we can never get to know what ancient Hebrews thought by drawing on the Christian's inner consciousness. The only course, clearly, is historical inquiry: which equally involves cognate studies on many subjects, whether we deal with Hebrew antiquities or others. Nor is it very creditable to the Christian mind to assume unwillingness to face results, even at the cost of disturbing preconceived ideas. Happily, results lead to the same conclusions in the end, with the advantage that, instead of leaving the past enveloped in mists of imagination, we can better see the guiding hand of God, and thereby co-ordinate, in all essentials, movements of the past with movements of to-day. In other words, the faith of men becomes both intelligent and intelligible.

As a solid groundwork, in our investigation into Old Testament ideas, we shall base largely on the prophetic *régime*; inasmuch as this moves in the realm of assured history, and enables us, also, on that account, to work backwards and forwards with tolerable certainty in extracting our historical data. We know, for example, just when Amos and Hosea were fulfilling their appointed mission in Southern and

Northern Israel, respectively. We know, to a detail, what obtained when the voices of Isaiah and of Micah were heard in the metropolis and by the countryside. From contemporary documents, we can accurately trace the events which bring Israel into conjunction with general world movements, such as the rise of the Assyrian power. By this means the fall of Samaria is at once lifted out of merely local significance, to become a fixed date in general history, and a convenient signpost in Israel's religious development. Earlier and later periods, likewise, are not without marks of identification; and in the light of all the data in the case, it becomes increasingly evident that there is a very noteworthy genetic development in the Hebrew conception of God.

At first, in Israel's ancient writings, the God of Israel appears to take his place in the Hebrew mind as a tribal god alongside the gods of other peoples. This is evidenced in various ways; but nothing could be more to the point than the naïve expostulation of the chieftain of Israel—erstwhile scouted by his compatriots on the score of his birth, but now, at a pinch, welcomed as their head—in conducting the dispute with the Ammonite king over the possession of certain lands to which each party laid claim:

"So now Yahweh, the God of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou possess hem? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh, thy god, giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever Yahweh, our god, hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess." (Jephthah, Judges xi. 23, 24.)

The point of view expressed in this passage is in

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precise accord with the general theistic ideas of the Semites, as disclosed in Assyrian records. This need cause no surprise, for Israel's early founders root in Semitic stock, and of necessity derive their early religious ideas from the same source. Israel, it will be remembered, in the theocratic covenant with which the name of Moses has become immortalized, is forbidden to worship any other gods but Yahweh; but the very phraseology of the original prohibition is a tacit recognition of the existence of other gods outside Israel. From this primitive conception of the God of Israel to that of the God of the whole earth is a vast distance, not taken at one stride. In the process the neighboring gods are seen to shrivel up into insignificance, and finally disappear; while, contrariwise, Yahweh is hailed as universal King. Such, in substance, are some of the early thought forms of the Hebrew mind.

In the Semitic mind, the tribal god was viewed as the god of the land over which he held sway: that is, the god was attached permanently to the country to which he belonged. Asshur was the god of Assyria, the same name for both god and land; Chemosh, the god of Moab and Ammon; Bel and Nebo of Babylon; Yahweh of Israel. If, by any mischance, a people became dispossessed of their land, they became likewise dispossessed of their god. The god and the land went together. This is the point of David's piteous plaint, in his outlaw days, in being driven from the "heritage of Yahweh." He would be shut out from the worship of Yahweh.—and with him, whatever else might be the case, the worship of Yahweh was the one grand desideratum (I. Sam. xxvi. 19; cf. II. Kings

iii. 26-27, where Chemosh is the god concerned; I. Kings xx. 23). How, then, could the patriarchal narrative (E) represent Jacob as going down to Egypt? The difficulty is expressly met by the writer in the statement that Yahweh had promised to take the journey with him (Gen. xlvii. 2-4). The effect of this relationship, for both national and religious life, finds frequent illustration in the annals of Israel and Assyria, and the inscriptions, on occasion, make it terribly plain.

It is precisely this relationship which explains Naaman's action in taking some of the soil from the land of Israel, to build an altar in Syria; because it was inconceivable that Yahweh could be worshipped except on his own proper soil:

"And Naaman said, . . . I pray thee, let there be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Yahweh." (II. Kings v. 17.)

It was this very fact—the inseparableness between divinity and country—which constituted the inexpressible heart pang, the nameless terror, to the ordinary Israelite, at the thought of going into exile; he would be taken from under the protection of his god. Just this was the master-stroke of Assyrian policy in deporting whole races—the people became separated from their gods, and their spirits broken. It was this close connection between god and people which made the ancient battles so fierce; for in the thought of the people it was not only the fate of their country which was at stake, but the country's cause was identified with that of their god.

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In all these respects Assyrian records offer an interesting parallel to the language used by Hebrews with the exception that Asshur takes the place of Yahweh. The conquest of a people, in each case, is put down to the credit of the god—in this we still contrive to do very much like the ancients, but with less reason—and the god of the conquerors becomes the conquering god, whose prowess has been demonstrated under the open heaven, to the immense satisfaction of his devotees, and the confusion of the gods opposed. The effect of such a conception on the mind of the unsophisticated Israelite, in the doubtful turns of national fortune, may be inferred. It was tantamount to cutting up by the roots the cherished conviction of Yahweh's supremacy, for the time being: and with such conviction shaken and shattered his strength was gone. The dreadful boast of the Rabshakeh before Jerusalem—haughty and impious in our eyes, but not altogether idle—was well calculated to weaken the heart of the people, and to cause, as we know, no little embarrassment to Hezekiah:

“Now on whom dost thou trust that thou hast rebelled? . . . But if ye say unto me, We trust in Yahweh, our god,—is not that he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? . . .

“Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, Yahweh will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah? Have they de-

livered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" (II. Kings xviii., 20-22, 32-35.)

Nothing could be more explicit as to the relation subsisting between the god and the land. To the same effect is the language of the request of the newly transplanted people of Samaria, asking for a priest of Yahweh; as they put down the ravages of the lions to the fact that they did not know the law of the land:

"Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast carried away and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the law of the god of the land; therefore he hath sent lions among them, and behold they slay them, because they know not the law of the god of the land." (II. Kings xvii. 26.)

Such a localized conception of God makes it easy to understand how theophanies came to be associated, in the Semitic and Hebrew mind, with certain sacred places and objects; of which the traditions of patriarchal and other times supply classic illustrations. Such local shrines, indeed, play a large part in Israel's religious history. Nor is it easy to see how revelation could be mediated otherwise, in its earlier stages, if it were to be in accord with the national genius. This means that we must frankly admit the presence, in some form or other, of a temporal element in revelation, all the way through; and part of the process in passing from lower to higher conceptions of God consists in disentangling just this temporal and human element from the divine.

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Natural and proper, then, as are such local shrines in the worship of an unsophisticated people, in their earlier career, they become snares eventually to unspiritual worshippers. On this ground they are ultimately discredited, and openly condemned, by the prophetic judgment, notwithstanding that national memories gathered round the chief of them, rich in historical association and religious significance. (I. Kings iii. 2; II. Kings xvii. 32-33; Ezekiel vi. 3, etc.) This interesting disclosure, in respect of the prophetic attitude, serves to shed light on the religious development all the way down, and to show the way in which divine revelation is mediated from age to age. Under reforming zeal, partly begun, as we have read, by Hezekiah, and effectually carried through under Josiah, high places and altars are done away with in Israel; and the danger of local cults, an ever-present element of religious disturbance through the absorption of neighboring peoples, effectually eliminated by placing emphasis on the Central Sanctuary, in Jerusalem. Of which more in its place.

CHAPTER V.

THE REVELATION NAME.

THE God of Israel was not always known distinctively as Yahweh. Later writers have projected the Revelation Name into the historic past, and sought, in combining Israel's traditions into consecutive narrative, to identify the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with Yahweh. This effort, bold and far-reaching, to unify the conception of God, offers an instructive illustration of the workings of Inspiration. In the case of the writer of Ex. vi. 2 (P), it is done with deliberate consciousness, in representing God as saying to Moses:

" . . . I am Yahweh; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as El Shaddai (God Almighty); but by my Name Yahweh was I not known to them."

Contrast this with the view of the writer of Gen. iv. 25-26 (J). Not only is Israel's God so exalted as completely to fill his vision, but in his story of the early history of mankind he naively carries the conception of Yahweh back to the very beginning. Speaking of the time of Enosh—two removes from Adam—he says:

"Then began men to call upon the Name of Yahweh."

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El, the generic name of God common to the Semites, is the most primitive term used for expressing the deity. Its antiquity among the Hebrews is attested by the fact that it is found in such early compounds as Israel, Bethel, etc. The root idea is Strength; with which comes to be associated the idea of Fear or dread. One classic reference speaks of God as the Fear of Isaac (Gen. xxxi. 42), and another as the Strength of Israel (I. Sam. xv. 29). The expanded plural form of Elohim applies to a Being incomparably grander, stronger and every way greater than man. No impropriety was felt in the Hebrew mind in applying this general name not only to other gods, but also, on occasion, to men: "I said, ye are Elohim," is a case in point (Ps. lxxxii. 6).

We can gather the conception of God associated with the name and fame of Abraham, the father of the Hebrew race, from the combined prophetic narrative of Israel's history (JE). Here we have presented to us the picture of a typical Arab sheik or chieftain, schooled in the manners of the times, governed by the code of honor and moral sanctions which then prevailed, but with a difference. For the current code instance only the affair of the plural wives, and the episode of Hagar and Ishmael. Abraham's part in the rescue of Lot in the battle of the Kings is in complete accord with Semitic ideas, except for the matter of the spoils, which the writer has an evident purpose in mentioning—it sets the national founder in contrast with his times. Abraham's Oriental facility in deceiving Pharaoh and Abimelech, though nowise jarring on Oriental susceptibilities, needless to say is no ideal for us. Nor will Abraham's

immature conception of God, as requiring him to slay his son, stand the Christian test; though perfectly intelligible in the light of the times. Very different is the case with regard to the inner aspects of Abraham's religious faith. Here we have an element of religious value for all succeeding generations. His moral ideal, likewise—defective though it must needs be—founding as it does on a religious basis, shares the possibilities of a corresponding development; until ultimately we shall come to see in one of his race and faith the moral and religious ideal blend in one. (Hagar, Gen. xvi. and xxi.; Rescue, Gen. xiv.; Isaac, Gen. xxii.; Pharaoh, Gen. xii. [J]; Abimelech, Gen. xx. [E]).

Further aspects of the religious conception are represented in the ladder or staircase scene, in Jacob's dream under the starlit sky; in which God's presence is symbolised by the Mazzebah, or pillar of rough stone, which Jacob sets up, and which he regards as God's "house." The pillar is regularly used, in Israel's earlier career, to symbolise a Covenant, between man and man, and between man and God (Gen. xxxi. 52-53; Ex. xxiv. 4 [JE]).

It is Moses who is brought specifically into conjunction with the Revelation Name. He is set before us as waking to a higher religious consciousness at the burning bush. This is undeniably a critical moment in the religious development. If we reject the abstract conception of pure being as too metaphysical for the Hebrews, we still have in this Name—the tetragrammaton—a conception of God as one who both makes His existence felt, and reveals Himself to His people. What He is will be made evident in

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process of time, in successive revelations—that is idea. He will become what He will become. Not being, after the Greek mode of thought; but Being manifesting itself in action, self-determining and unchangeable—that is the idea ultimately wrought out, after the Hebrew mode of thought. This is an accession of quite incalculable consequence to the idea of God.

Not that we are to suppose that the full significance of the Revelation Name was perceived all at once. That is expressly ruled out by the Name itself. Both in form and in fact Yahweh is the Name of Revelation. Nor are we to suppose that the Name was unknown before. That is impossible; since it is simply the third person masculine singular of the imperfect tense of the commonest and most indispensable verb. Its special significance lies in its unique and exclusive personal application to the God of Israel. However imperfectly grasped, it was undoubtedly a moment of sublime revelation when this fact was borne home for the first time to the consciousness of Moses; thereby ushering in one of the most momentous epochs in the religious history of mankind.

As the outcome of the Revelation Name we have the definite abandonment of the idea that the deity can be associated with any graven image. Pause a moment to take in the significance of this astounding fact. In the early history of the clan Rachel might possess herself of her father's household gods, and keep them, without raising any question of religious propriety otherwise than as they might chance to be stolen property. (Gen. xxxi. 30, *et seq.*) This recognition of teraphim, or household gods, shared

in by early Israel in common with Syrian and other Semitic co-religionists, lasts on indefinitely in the popular mind, and appears side by side with the Yahweh religion, apparently with perfect acquiescence. This is seen in the antique story of Micah and his "house of God" in the hill country of Ephraim, during the mixed state of things while the land of Canaan was in process of settlement, and when as yet Dan had not secured an inheritance (Judges xvii., xviii.). It comes into evidence again during the early monarchy, in the person of Michal, daughter of Saul, David's wife. (I. Sam. xix. 13, *et seq.*) Hosea, the first of the literary prophets in the Northern kingdom, refers to it in speaking of the remedial purpose in view in Israel's being deprived of civil and religious institutions (Hosea iii. 4). And the author of Zech. x. 2, probably centuries later, touches on it in such a way as to show its baleful influence still persisting in the land. The growing power of the Yahweh religion is manifested in the ultimate extinction of teraphim, and in the extirpation of witchcraft, both of which run counter to the express spirit and terms of the Theocratic Covenant (Ex. xx. 4; xxii. 18).

However it came about, it was just this definite break with image worship which constituted the vital point of departure in Israel's religious development, and marked off forever the Hebrews from the rest of their Semite co-religionists. No doubt antecedent conditions led up to this result; for it is a psychological necessity that there must have been promptings, of some kind, in this direction, and probably for a long time before. Perhaps on the part of some more gifted

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souls there had come to be an undefined feeling of uselessness, and growing indifference to images. However this may be, and whatever obtained in practice, it may be taken as settled by the Sinai memorials that there was no definite break in thought until we come to the time of the Revelation Name. The two events go together, and the one is the complement of the other.

In such explicit abandonment of images there is a tacit recognition of the essential invisibility of the deity, so far as Israel's God is concerned; which implies a possible ubiquity capable of passing into a later universality. No picturing, then, of Israel's God is allowed; no graven or carven image. Israel's God is a transcendental deity, unseen—that is the Object set up for Israel's worship. In advance, undoubtedly, of the general mass, both then and for long afterward; but clearly come to birth in the religious consciousness of Moses. It was this very truth which, through her God-inspired leaders, lifted Israel to the forefront of the nations, and enabled her to hold her own against seemingly overwhelming odds, and so, at least, preserve the race from extinction. Incidentally it helped, doubtless, to strike terror into the hearts of her foes.

The theophany on Sinai is indissolubly associated, in Hebrew eyes, with the extraordinary sanctity of the place. For Hebrew and Semite both, Sinai was chiefest of all places sacred to deity, by reason of the incomparable surroundings, in their overpowering sublimity. For the primitive consciousness, Flaming Bush and Burning Mount are essential elements. For us, they fall into the background as accessories, mere

staging in the general effect. What is of eternal significance is the inner meaning of the Yahweh Name, which stands out in characters of fire; and which finds fit memorial in the ten short statements (as originally promulgated, probably exceedingly brief) that have come down to us as embodying the substance of the Mosaic ideal. Under the inspiration of such an exalted conception of God it becomes intelligible how Moses could carry through his mission—a mission without a parallel—and by so doing leave the impress of his genius on the race.

The religious conceptions of the time partly appear in the language of the accompanying Covenant, which registers the formal recognition of the relations entered into between Yahweh and the twelve tribes (Ex. xx. 22—xxiii. 33 [E]). There is no thought of elaborate ceremonial; such would be out of accord with the time. The altar must be of the simplest, of earth, or stones in the rough. Sacrifices are equally primitive in their simplicity. Places which in the tribal consciousness of Israel, and of the surrounding tribes, are associated with deity, are naively recognized in the ordinary course as local shrines. And finally God is regarded as the immediate source of judgment, in everyday matters of doubt or dispute:

“An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings, thy sheep and thine oxen. In every place where I record my Name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou make Me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stones, for if thou lift up thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it.” (Ex. xx. 24-25.) “For every matter of trespass,

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whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, whereof one saith, This is it, the cause of both parties shall come before God." (Ex. xxii. 9; cf. I. Sam. ii. 25; ix. 6, *et seq.*)

An elaborate code of civil and ceremonial enactments is clearly the work of a later age, with which have been incorporated the earlier materials to form our present record.

By this separation of deity from visible and artificial representations, the God of Israel is raised immeasurably above the gods of the surrounding nations. On such a basis, Israel may well become a separate people. On such a basis moral law can build. On such a basis Prophetism can firmly plant its feet and run its appointed course, shaping the destinies of Israel, and preparing the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER VI.

TRANSITION TO PROPHETISM.

BEFORE the prophet, in order of time, comes the seer (I. Sam. ix. 9), who exercised his functions contemporaneously with the "judges," or local chieftains, who ruled the scattered tribes. As yet Israel was not consolidated under a single government, and it was possible, on occasion, to combine the functions of seer and ruler in one, as in the person of Samuel (I. Sam. vii. 15). Special importance attaches to Samuel, as regards both the national and religious development of Israel. He it is who inaugurated the monarchy, and of him it is first said that he was established to be a prophet of Yahweh (I. Sam. iii. 20; cf. ix. 9). A memorial of the time is seen in the passing of Shiloh (I. Sam. i. 24; iii. 10, *et seq.*; cf. Ps. lxxviii. 60; Jer. vii. 14).

In the transition from early primitive seer, or diviner, to later prophet, there is a change in both inward and outward characteristics. In the fervor and faith of earlier times there is a fierceness which in later times is toned down. There is a vast difference, e.g., between the seer-prophet hewing Agag in pieces with his own hand—which accords with the temper of Moses towards the calf-worshippers, in the early days of the Yahweh religion—and the individual attitude of individual prophets in the later

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régime (I. Sam. xv. 33; cf. Ex. xxxii. 25, ff.). The real Samuel must be placed alongside the real Moses, the real David and the real Saul.

Ecstasy and trance more especially characterise the seer, and relate him to the diviners of other races and other times. Seer and soothsayer are not far removed, the functions of both grounding in the common psychic nature of man; surviving illustrations of which we have to-day in the frenzy of the Dervish and the psychic qualities inherent in individual men. It is, in fact, this explicit distinguishing of functions, in the religious development, which marks off a further departure of Israel from surrounding tribes. Under the prophetic *régime*, ecstasy, though still a characteristic, occupies a less important place; until ultimately, in his wider vision and larger interpretation of world events, the prophet supersedes the seer as the exponent of the will of God in the affairs of men. The essential characteristic of prophetism is its unmistakable note of moral protest; the emphasis which in all its utterances is placed on moral and social righteousness, and which, in the prophetic thought, is indissolubly linked with the fear of God.

The primitive conception of God moves easily from that of the Strong and Terrible to that of the God of battles, God of the conquering armies of Israel, God of hosts—Yahweh Sabaoth—which comes to be a characteristic name (II. Sam. v. 10; cf. I. Sam. i. 11, etc.). This warlike conception of the God of Israel is evidenced in the Book of the Wars of Yahweh, quoted by a later writer, which recounts in triumphant strain His exploits in His people's behalf, in connection with the stirring times of the Conquest and Set-

tlement (Num. xxi. 14 [E]; also cf. I. Sam. xviii. 17; xxv. 28). It finds lasting expression in the exultant utterance of Moses, preserved in Israel's national songs:

"I will sing unto Yahweh, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
Yah is my Strength and Song,
And he is become my Salvation.
This is my God, and I will praise him;
My father's God and I will exalt him!
Yahweh is a man of war;
Yahweh is his Name!" (Ex. xv. 1-3 [E]).

The conception of God as a warrior-God, the Protector of His people, Strong and Terrible to His foes, Jealous of His rights as a tribal deity (Ex. xx. 4; cf. Josh. xxiv. 19, etc.), receives an accession later of the deepest interest, the ethical significance of which cannot be over-estimated, helping to round out the meaning of the Revelation Name. Such enlarged and glorified conception—which brings us to a more developed time, when the monarchy is in full swing, and within sight of the great literary prophets—must have been grasped in consciousness just as firmly as the fact of God's invisibility, to explain the prophetic rôle. This gracious conception of the nation's God finds its first classic expression in the pictorial language of the prophetic writer whose vivid delineations of Israel's early history so enrich the books of the Pentateuch. Looking back on the (renewed) theophany on Sinai, he goes on to say:

"And Yahweh descended in the cloud, and stood with him (Moses) there, and proclaimed the name of Yahweh. And Yahweh passed by before him, and

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proclaimed Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness and truth; keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation" (Ex. xxxiv. 5-7 [J]).

A deep glance this, it will be observed, as to the outworking of sin, all the more striking for the antique cast of thought, worthy to go with the same author's profound insight into the origin of evil in the story of Eden. Note that the conception of God in the passage cited, in the commingling of justice and mercy, affiliates with the protevangelium, and with the treatment accorded to Cain, in the sad sequel to the story of Eden (Gen. iii. 15; iv. 15 [J]).

With this ancient utterance ought, perhaps, to go the memorable saying put into the mouth of Samuel later, to emphasise the defection of Saul:

"Hath Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (I. Sam. xv. 22.)

There is a blending of earlier and later elements here which betrays its prophetic origin, the later point of view being thrown back into earlier times. The prophetic attitude is seen in the antithesis drawn between the moral qualities of obedience and the ceremonial demands of sacrifice.

The transition from seer to prophet, brought into connection, as we have seen, with the monarchy, discloses further characteristics, which require a

further brief reference. In the early stage of a people the functions belonging respectively to seer and priest are closely related, and frequently unite in one and the same person. A seer would, in the natural course, be also a priest, although not every priest would have the qualifications of a seer. This finds exemplification in the person of Samuel. The seer's functions are often associated with certain primitive accessories, such as the ark, the ephod, urim and thummim, etc., which later prophets leave behind. The ecstasy which we have noted as characterising the Hebrew seer comes into prominence in the well-known saying: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" which had reference to just this ecstatic condition, as he met the band of "prophets" coming down the hill. (I. Sam. x. 11.) A second account of the same proverb gives us a still more primitive touch in representing Saul, in the ecstatic condition, as stripping off his clothes, and lying down naked all day and all night (I. Sam. xix. 24). Similarly with regard to David dancing before the ark (II. Sam. vi. 16, 20).

Note that, at the time, Gilgal, and other places, are regularly associated with the worship of Yahweh, and that sacrifices, in the ordinary course, are simple peace offerings:

"Then said Samuel to the people, Come and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before Yahweh, in Gilgal; and there they offered sacrifices of peace offerings before Yahweh." (I. Sam. xi. 15.)

Note also, in the story of Saul seeking his father's asses, that men go to the seer to inquire of God in

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every-day matters like the straying of animals; and that in the custom of consulting the ephod, in different episodes of David's life, there is a suggestion of something like fortune telling (I. Sam. ix. 6; cf. xxiii. 9; xxx. 7). Allied to this is the casting of lots, in connection with Urim and Thummim, and otherwise, to obtain a divine pronouncement on any question,—a custom exceedingly primitive, which persisted down ever to apostolic days (I. Sam. xxiii. 10; xiv. 41, etc.; cf. Ex. xxviii. 15-30; Acts i. 26; Prov. xvi. 33). Yahweh is characteristically thought of as Israel's tribal deity, ever ready to do battle with Israel's foes (II. Sam. v. 10, etc.).

A special sanctity attaches to the person of the king, as Yahweh's Anointed, irrespective of character. This comes out in the cave scene, when Saul's life was in David's power (I. Sam. xxiv. 5-6). The primitive religious conceptions of David are seen in his practice of going to Abiathar to consult the ephod, already referred to. Most of his life is taken up fighting the battles of Yahweh (I. Sam. xxv. 28; xxx. 26; cf. II. Sam. vii. 1; viii. 1, *et seq.*). On the return of the ark he, too, catches the spirit of ecstasy, and dances before Yahweh with all his might (II. Sam. vi. 14). His desire to build a house for Yahweh—who up till now had no fixed abode, but “walked in a tent,” i.e., was subject to the nomadic conditions of Israel's unsettled life—at first encouraged by Nathan, his prophet-counsellor, is immediately checked by him as a result of a new view of things gained overnight. Yahweh had spoken! This puts the Yahweh religion in contrast with the very human and natural first-thoughts of the prophet; and gives the opportunity late in Israel's history for a writer of

ecclesiastical bent to explain the fact—else incomprehensible to him—on the ground that David had shed much blood (II. Sam. vii. 2-4, *et seq.*; cf. I. Chron. xxii. 8).

David, as the real founder of the monarchy, is illustrious in Israel as the great hero-king who made the name of Yahweh feared among the neighboring peoples. This was a work certainly of the first importance, in the establishment of the monarchy; since it made Israel's existence as a nation possible, and thereby provided a suitable soil on which the Yahweh religion could grow up, according to its own proper genius, free from foreign influences. David's rule is remembered gratefully, inasmuch as it shed glory on all the after-history of Israel; on which account, in the national traditions, David is set in strong contrast with Saul, as a man after Yahweh's own heart (I. Sam. xiii. 14). On this account, later times—less illustrious—invested him and his rôle with unique significance; and, viewing the heroic past in the light of the less heroic present, in their religious devotion came to regard him, in a specially exalted sense, as the Anointed of God—in a sense, be it observed, totally different from what had obtained in current times. For illustration, it is only necessary to refer to the varied utterances, heart-broken or exultant, of psalmists and others, who had passed through the Exile, or shared in the later experiences (II. Sam. xxiii. 1; cf. Ps. xviii. 50; lxxviii. 70; lxxxix. 3, 20; cxxii. 5; Isa. lv. 3; etc.). To the same potent fact, doubtless, may be traced the reason for the superscription of so many psalms. The transition through the LXX to the New Testament conception of David as a prophet becomes then quite easy (Acts ii. 30, etc.).

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How relentlessly the real David, Yahweh's Anointed, could wage war, is shown by the barbarous treatment meted out to the Ammonites (II. Sam. xii. 31). The episode of Bathsheba—to mention no more—brings to light another feature in the famous king. It is not through David, then, but through Nathan that we must look for the prophetic development. Nathan, who before had intervened to check the proposal to build a house for Yahweh, again comes on the scene in the name of Yahweh to supply the moral corrective. His parable will always be a delight for its intrinsic beauty, no less than for its exquisite aptness to the case in hand. Yet there is an important distinction to make. We must not read later ideas into earlier times. The sin committed is not viewed as the moral violation in our sense of the term, but as the violation of tribal and individual rights. Not the actual impurity, but the injury done to the person of a man's wife, viewed as his most cherished possession—the sin is against the man rather than the woman. The whole parable turns on this point, which is precisely that of the tenth provision in the Decalogue, where the wife is classed with the rest of a man's possessions, and regarded in the light of property. Out of this lower conception, under the inspiring genius of the Yahweh religion, a higher ethical conception will eventually emerge, which, equally with the religious aspects of prophetism, will find ultimate fulfilment in the Christian ideal (II. Sam. xii. 1, *et seq.*; cf. Mark x. 3, *et seq.*). The contrast, not to say contrariety, between the Old and the New way of looking at things, all round, is put by no one more clearly, or more forcibly, than by Jesus Himself. (See Matt. v. *passim.*)

CHAPTER VII.

THE LITERARY PROPHETS.

WE are seeking to trace, in these pages, not Israel's history, national or religious, but the development of the Yahweh religion, in the persons of Israel's religious leaders, through whom the successive revelations of God principally come. By the times of the monarchy the prophetic gift had already been brought under discipline, in connection with schools of the prophets, in which young men with the prophetic gift were banded together under the immediate eye of some prophetic man, from whom, by personal contact, they might catch the prophetic spirit. Whether originating with Samuel or not, such schools or bands were in full going order before the times of Elijah; and as an influential representative class continued to give leaders to Israel, but without limiting the call of God in raising up men (I. Sam. x. 10; I. Kings xx. 35; II. Kings ii. 3, etc.; cf. Amos vii. 14). This question of training, in respect of the exercise of the prophetic office, shows how early, in matters even of "prophecy," the human is found consciously co-operation with the divine.

Elijah, the rugged Tishbite, bursting on the scene with startling suddenness, is, no doubt, intended to mark a distinct phase in Israel's religious development. He comes midway, historically and religiously, between the times of Samuel the Seer and the literary

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prophets, affiliating in some respects with both. Grim and stern he appears in the eyes of Ahab as the Troubler of Israel (I. Kings xviii. 17). Zeal for Yahweh, the God of hosts, is his one consuming passion, standing out conspicuously in his fierce and uncompromising attitude towards the prophets of Baal (I. Kings xviii. 40, etc.). On this account he provokes the animosity of Jezebel, to whom the insistence on Yahweh's exclusiveness is specially repugnant, as conflicting with her heathen eclecticism and infamous life. Elijah's action in the slaying of the prophets links him with Samuel hewing Agag in pieces before Yahweh (I. Sam. xv. 33). When he confronts Ahab in the matter of Naboth's vineyard, we catch the note of moral protest which we heard in Nathan, and which comes to full expression in the later prophets (I. Kings xxi. 17-24). To these prophets we must now hasten on.

The appearance of the literary prophets synchronises with the rise of the Assyrian power. Nor is there any accident in the two events coming together, for the one is really the outcome of the other. By this means Israel is brought into conjunction with the great world movements of the times. The whole situation illustrates the wonderful blending of historical and providential elements in the actual affairs of a nation's life. On the one hand, Israel had both made and unmade history, as the record of the monarchy shows; for there were now two kingdoms instead of one. The Northern Kingdom, owing to its geographical position in the full path of the international high road running between Asia and Africa, and its possession of rich agricultural lands in the

vale of Esdraelon, was exactly suited for commerce; and with the development of commerce came immense wealth, and its accompaniments, luxury and licentiousness. Not only so, but economic conditions brought about a class question, also, socially, of an acute kind, as between the rich and the poor.

Assyria, now in its ascendancy in the East, was busy pushing its policy of expansion to the West, with the sea as its ultimate goal; so that it was only a question of time when, in their onward march, the Assyrians would cross the path of Israel. This the prophetic mind unerringly sensed. Counsels of wisdom—had Israel been wise—would have determined, above everything else, that Israel should stand solidly together in presence of this colossal danger, a compact and united people, unweakened by internal divisions, unsapped by vice. In both these respects exactly opposite conditions obtained. This did not escape the prophetic eye. Looking the situation full in the face, he read in his country's conditions, and surrounding conditions, only too truly, his country's doom, unless, perchance, his country should be induced to repent and reform. With that quick glance which penetrates into the very core of the question he sees that Israel is actually inviting ruin, and in the darkening shadow of the Assyrian approach he recognises the means already marked out for the accomplishment of the appointed end. The nation, truly, is responsible for its own undoing; but remedially considered, the Assyrian is the divinely appointed agent for the scourging of the nation's sins. The seeming prosperity and carnal security of the nation will be the very bait to lure the invader on.

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These, then, are the conditions, social and religious, which determine the attitude of the literary prophets in their divinely appointed mission, and governing both the tenor and form in which they addressed their appeals, not only as respects Israel, in the North, but also, *mutatis mutandis*, as respects Judah, in the South.

As our first distinctive utterance of the literary prophets, let us take the passionate heart cry of Amos, a sheep-raiser and fruit-grower of the South, but addressing himself to the people of the North, voicing in the pathos of human words the undying truth of the eternal. Here, demonstrably, a new era in the religious development is being ushered in, in which we catch the essential keynote of prophetism, now superbly struck, and sounding down the centuries in all its grand impressiveness:

"Hear this word that Yahweh hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore, I will visit upon you all your iniquities."

"For thus saith Yahweh unto the house of Israel, Seek me, and ye shall live; but seek not Bethel, nor go into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought."

"Seek good and not evil, that ye may live; and so Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil and love the good, and establish justice in the gate. It may be that Yahweh, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph."

"Woe unto you that desire the Day of Yahweh. Wherefore would ye have the Day of Yahweh? It is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the Day of Yahweh be darkness and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?"

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream!" (Amos iii. 1-2; v. 4-5, 14-15, 18-24).

Let us give all attention to these weighty utterances, the actual words of the first of the literary prophets whose messages have come down to us, and whose words are of such vast importance to religious knowledge, inasmuch as they move in the realm of assured history. Here we have disclosed to us, as he unburdens himself, both the prophet's point of view and the religious beliefs then current, during the eighth century B.C. The mention of Yahweh as the God of hosts takes us back to the early warlike conception when he was thought of as the God of the armies of Israel. Insensibly the viewpoint changes from the earth to the skies, until ultimately God of hosts comes to signify the God that rules the stars and the armies of heaven. Note that the prophet is pulling away from the local shrines—Bethel, Gilgal, Beersheba—which have figured largely in the earlier

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stages of the nation's life; and, generally, is living in an atmosphere mentally, morally, and religiously, in complete contrast with earlier times. Ritualistic tendencies, all too evident, developed by the Temple *régime* instituted by Solomon, ministering to the sensuous rather than the spiritual side of religious life—meet with stern rebuke. Note also that we are introduced for the first time to the familiar expression, Day of Yahweh, current in Israel as synonymous with the good time coming. In popular speech one thing; in the mouth of the prophet quite another, namely, a "day of judgment" to come for the nation—taken over later into New Testament thought, prophetically, as the "Day of the Lord." The election of Israel for high and holy purposes receives frank recognition, and the nation's responsibility in the light of its sacred obligations is pointedly indicated. Altogether it will be felt, in this first recorded utterance of the literary prophets, we are breathing an atmosphere and moving in an environment, religiously, so far as the prophet is concerned, widely different from anything that has gone before, but not differing exceedingly from that which is felt instinctively to be appropriate to the spirit of devotion of to-day. So does the prophetic outlook, from its own standpoint in current times, in the full course of the onrushing centuries, escape the bounds of time and sense; and by reason of the end in view, and the attitude determined thereby, in its essential inwardness, fuse past, present and future in one.

The strain of Amos is taken up by his Northern contemporary, Hosea. He lived in the luxurious and licentious reign of Jeroboam II.—opulent and op-

pressive—with its calf-worship, corruption, oppression, and general degeneration. With breaking heart he reads the approaching fate of his country writ large in the prevailing conditions—hastened by anarchy after the death of the king, until the downfall comes, when Israel becomes a vassal to Tiglath-Pileser. Thus ignominiously ends the regular *régime* of the Northern Kingdom (734 B.C.), of whose decline and fall Hosea is at the same time the melancholy witness and prophetic interpreter for both contemporary and after times. See how the prophet throws himself into the situation—which for him is complicated by the relations between himself and his wife. But he knows a balm for this sore wound; in these sore straits he can extract sweetness where others only find bitterness; amid all the discords he can strike one full, rich note. It is, in fact, a new note which is struck. For Hosea is the first to bring into prominence the idea of love as determining the relations between Yahweh and his people. The prophet's tender regard for Gomer, his frail and fickle wife, is superbly used to bring home the thought of the undying constancy of Yahweh. The covenant bond between Yahweh and his people is likened to a marriage relationship that shall know no end. All is forgiven. The love of Yahweh is changeless. This is the gospel according to Hosea. How affecting both in tone and language is the whole deliverance may be gauged by the following passage:

“Therefore, behold I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her (to the heart of her). . . . And it shall be at that day, saith Yahweh, that thou shalt call me Ishi (my

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husband), and shalt call me no more Baali (my lord). For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be mentioned by their name . . . and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know Yahweh. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will answer, saith Yahweh . . . and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God" (Hosea ii. 14-23).

The same yearning tenderness is expressed under another familiar figure, in calling Israel a son: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hosea xi. 1).

The tone and substance of the whole book finds fit expression in the immortal words—taken on the lips of Jesus later, and gathering fresh significance there—which go to the very heart of the relations between a gracious God and sinful man: "I desire loving kindness and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos. vi. 6).

It is not difficult to see how the fires of national and personal sorrow would be a vital factor in conditioning such a touching conception of God. This further revelation needed just such a dark background before it could be made known. Dire sin becomes the occasion for the manifestation of abounding grace. How accurately the thought of the eternal is caught,

and how exquisitely phrased! Nothing more profound can well be conceived concerning the relations between God and man. Thus most gloriously doth ethical supersede ceremonial as prophet supersedes seer in the unfolding vision of God.

For Hosea, Yahweh is also the Living God, a title which occurs once before, in the prophetic narrative of the Hexateuch, and which finds frequent reference later (Hos. i. 10; cf. Josh. iii. 10 [J]; I. Sam. xvii. 26; Jer. x. 10; II. Kings xix. 4; Deut. v. 26; etc.). This is a further contribution to the conception of God who is essentially invisible, and who, in consequence, may become, in thought, universal.

Note, in passing, that Baal (Lord, Master, Owner) was once used, interchangeably, of Israel's God, as well as other gods; but is now going out of fashion on account of untoward associations.

Micah, a native of the South, like Amos, but a townsman, addresses himself to Judah, which, now that the Northern Kingdom has collapsed, becomes the chief centre of prophetic interest. A younger contemporary of Isaiah, a plain countryman, he shows the influence of his surroundings, and speaks as a man of the people who is keenly interested in the wrongs sustained by the common folk at the hands of the rich; whereas Isaiah is intimately connected with the capital and court. It is he who gives us the noble summing up of the whole duty of man in language which, for point and pithiness, puts the case for prophetism, in its earthward aspect, for all time to come: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. vi. 8).

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Allowing for all the effect of long time familiarity, is there anything so forcible in its terse putting, so accessible to the common mind, that has come down to us from antiquity, touching the relations of man to man, and man to God? Thus seven or eight centuries before the Christian era, under the gracious inspiration of the Yahweh religion, does prophetism reach its sublime goal in blending forever the religious and moral ideal in one.

When we come to Isaiah (called 740 B.C.), the master-seer of Israel, in the higher sense, the prophet-statesman of Jerusalem—who precedes Micah slightly in order of time—we are at once in the company of the immortals, treading the heavenly heights. He is the first to emphasise the awful Holiness of Israel's God, but with the higher vision contrives to keep in closest touch with national affairs. His unfailing prescience, ever a tower of strength to Jerusalem in her dark and anxious days, stands the king in good stead on more than one occasion, on the near approach of the Assyrian host. These are times that are big with destiny, both for Israel and the nations, for that they are brought into direct conjunction with one of the great world movements of history. There is a moral fitness in the birth, at such a time, of such a man as Isaiah, whose commanding genius, dedicated to the prophetic office, towers high above all his predecessors, and stands in solitary splendor, unsurpassed.

It is in the vision recording his call that we first gaze on the ineffable majesty of the divine glory. The very seraphim veil their faces and cover their feet. For sinful man, as represented in the person of the

prophet, the effect in thus drawing near to the presence of God is to bring home a piercing sense of moral uncleanness, to be mystically purged away by altar fire. (Is. vi. 1, *et seq.*) As we ponder over the collection of discourses of the prophet, which, though having reference principally to Judah and Jerusalem, in their wide range of vision cast glances over the world, we see that in the prophet's mind Israel's God is brought into conjunction with the movements of history, and the rise and fall of nations is but the outworking of the divine purpose. Yahweh is majestically depicted as stretching out, brandishing, swinging his arm over the earth; rising up in his majesty and silencing those who manifest disdain. The conceptions are anthropomorphic, of course, as are previous conceptions, part of the human element conditioning revelation; but they rise spontaneously out of the prophetic consciousness, and fitly register the stage reached in the religious development (Isa. v. 25; x. 26; xiv. 26; xix. 16; xxiii. 11; xxxi. 2-3, etc.).

Isaiah loves to think of Yahweh as the Holy One of Israel, Yahweh of hosts (Isa. i. 4; iii. 1, etc.). The two ideas are conjoined with the recognition of world-wide sway in the seraphic cry which shook the foundations of the temple and filled the house with smoke: "Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. v. i. 3).

Such a cry might well, in the ancient mind, be introduced amidst such overpowering surroundings; for it registers, in pictorial form, the effectual transition from the local to the universal, in the conception of God. In Isaiah's inspired thought Israel's God is

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the only God; at least other gods sink into such insignificance that they do not count. We may not have, as yet, a strict monotheism; but the practical effect, if not the theoretic formulation, of such a conception is already grasped. Idols are mere no-things, the work of men's hands (Isa. ii. 8, 18, 20; xix. 1).

Isaiah lived in several reigns, and took a keen interest in national politics, which, as stated, are brought into closest contact, in the prophet's mind, with the thought of God. They were stirring and tragic times for Judah and Israel, and for the world, when men's hearts were often made to quake with fear at the sound of the hoofs of the Assyrian hosts. Isaiah lifts up his voice against one and another of the surrounding nations, all brought into conjunction with Israel's history, at some time, and all destined to fall before the mighty invader. Egypt, equally with the rest, will succumb to the Assyrian, and the folly of trusting to that broken reed is energetically portrayed. Isaiah walks the streets of Jerusalem, habited in captive attire, for three years, symbolically indicating the Egyptian fate, a warning to all. He had witnessed, at a distance, early in his career, the collapse of the Northern Kingdom, before Tiglath Pileser, to be followed twelve years later (722 B.C.) by the downfall of Samaria, the last stronghold in the North, before Sargon, and the deportation of the remnant of Israel. Now with his own eyes he sees Judah invaded, and Jerusalem besieged, at the behest of Sennacherib. Never, however, during all these times of stress and storm, does Isaiah falter for a moment in proclaiming the supremacy of Yahweh; and the retreat of the Assyrian host, at that critical juncture,

is a striking commentary on the prophet's claim. In his view the dreaded Assyrian is but an instrument in the hands of Israel's God, and shall himself be brought low while Judah shall flourish afresh, and the remnant of Israel be gathered again (Isa. viii. 4, *et seq.*; cf. ix. 1-7; x. 5—xii. 6; xx.; xxviii. 1-2; xxxi. 1-3; xxxii., etc.).

Isaiah clings in his heart to the thought of a renovated land, and fixes his hope upon some royal child who, instructed in the law of Yahweh, grown up, is to be the agent by which it shall be brought about. It seems as though, in the prophet's thoughts, his hopes for Judah, and through Judah for the world, could be realized only through some royal scion sitting on the throne of Judah, whose mild and pacific rule and personal attitude should be the means of establishing the Torah of Yahweh in the land. Human elements here again enter unmistakably into the prophet's conception, but in such a way only as is inevitable in linking eternal truth with temporal forms, and in no wise invalidating the larger interpretation of the prophet's vision. The child of his hopes, who afterwards became the anointed king, was, apparently, Hezekiah; but the ideal picturings of the Messianic King and his gracious sway, though rooting in historical conditions, utterly transcend them, so far as Hezekiah is concerned; and thus once more the divine breaks away from the human and points forward to some higher fulfilment to come.

To the unrivalled religious genius of Isaiah we owe not only the superb creation of the Messianic King, who reigns in righteousness—the refuge of the oppressed—but also the ideal picturings of a trans-

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formed earth, "when the troubles of the present are past," in some blissful time to come (Isa. ix. 6-7; xi. 1-10; xxxii. 1-8, etc.). In these and other respects he leaves his predecessors far behind in his conceptions of God. His ample vision, transcending the bounds of ancient Israel, sees the nations coming to Jerusalem to share her blessings; while the Torah of Yahweh, issuing from Jerusalem, overspreads the earth (Isa. ii. 2-4, etc.). His portrayal of the Messianic King and Kingdom serves as seed thought for later prophetic reflections, and is ultimately taken up into Christian thought, to become part and parcel of the Christian ideal.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CULMINATION OF PROPHETISM.

As we have seen, the religion of ancient Israel, developed in the religious consciousness of her prophets, issues in a virtual monetheism which is free from the more debasing elements of polytheistic thought. In the process we have noted that it passes from the narrow particularism of a chosen people to an incipient universalism worthy of a world religion. The God of Israel becomes the God of the whole earth. Anticipations of coming good, on the large scale, are projected into the future, which are of the first importance to Israel, and through Israel to the world, and which, on that account, lend themselves to extended signification.

At each successive phase in the religious development we find, indissolubly associated, some corresponding phase in the national life which serves as memorial for both. Religion being, from first to last, the one determining factor in the national development, makes the history of Israel unique. The national life begins in an act of faith. It was a great moment when, at the behest of the inner voice, Abraham drew away from his fellow-clansmen of Chaldea to face the unknown. He left their land, and he left their gods; not only not knowing whither he went, but

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in venturing across the Euphrates, not divining, unless in the dimmest manner, the historic consequences of his act. There is, undoubtedly, here to be recognized, at the beginning of the national history, a point of departure of the utmost religious significance, in thus breaking away, under a religious motive, from ancestral connections, to go to a new land and found a race. It made historically possible the mediation of a higher revelation, through successive stages, as fast as the people were able to bear it, and as far as the historical development would allow. This is working on the plan of the centuries, easy to the thought of God, but quite beyond the strength of finite man to conceive, or carry out, except as he is taught and led (Isa. lv. 8-9; cf. Gen. xii. 1-3).

Similarly, the memorable deliverance from Egypt—never to be effaced from the national memory—and the erection of Israel into nationhood, under Moses, is bound up with the revelation of the unspeakable Name. The passing of Shiloh, with its tabernacle service—which had come to occupy so large a place in the primitive tribal and religious consciousness—along with the inauguration of the monarchy, witnesses in Samuel the transition of the seer to the prophet. The rise of the Assyrian power, betokening a great world movement, so full of portent to Israel and Judah, brings into existence the line of literary prophets, with their enlarged and enlarging conceptions of God, widening and widening until localism is lost. The approaching downfall of Judah and Exile carry to a culmination the long religious development we are endeavoring to trace. To this further phase we must now attend.

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Before the downfall of Judah, and before the reformation under Josiah—we have, in Zephaniah, a voice from the past depicting the dire condition of things which then obtained. In the prophetic thought the great Day of Yahweh is at hand, and is invested with grim significance. Taking up the symbolism of sacrifice so much in evidence in the temple ministrations, and so much a part of the people's thought, he gives to it a new and gruesome turn. Yahweh hath prepared a sacrifice; the Day of Yahweh is the day of Yahweh's sacrifice; the victims are the Jews; and the participants in the sacrificial offering are the nations consecrated for the occasion! (Zeph. i. 7, 8, etc.; cf. I. Sam. xvi. 5.) This Day of Yahweh is a day of trouble and distress, both for Judah and the world, for all the nations will be involved; but out of the ordeal a remnant of Israel will emerge, purified, over whom God will rejoice with joy (Zeph. iii. 8, 13, 17). Perhaps in his descriptions of the Day of Yahweh there is a reminiscence of the terror inspired by the invasions of the Scythian hosts from the North—as also in the language of Jeremiah.

By the time of Jeremiah we come upon a new phase in the prophetic thought of God. This is evidenced in the writings of what may be called the Deuteronomic school, the enduring representative of which is our Deuteronomy—the book “discovered” in the temple five years after Jeremiah had entered on his prophetic career (626 B.C.). It is in Deuteronomy that the memorable words occur which supplied Jesus with a ready answer to the Scribe's inquiry touching the greatest commandment in the law:

“Hear, O Israel: Yahweh, our God, is One Yahweh;

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and thou shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. vi. 4, *et seq.*; Mark xii. 29; cf. II. Kings xxii. 8).

In Deuteronomy we reach a strict monotheism; the unity and spirituality of God, which excludes worship of sun, moon and stars, as well as strange Elohim, being the prominent characteristic. The book of Deuteronomy is nothing else than a reformulation of the Mosaic ideal, on a higher plane, at the instance of the later prophetic thought, infusing a new spirit into the Yahweh religion. See, for instance, the spiritualising of the Mosaic provisions in the ten commandments (Deut. v., cf. Ex. xx.). Israel's segregation from heathen influences, sedulously inculcated by former prophets in the interest of the Yahweh religion, issues, under Deuteronomic influence, in the unconditional abolition of local shrines. For the reforming campaign, instituted by Josiah, owed its origin directly to the reading of Deuteronomy—the "book of the law"—in the hearing of the king. Henceforth the Central Sanctuary stands supreme and undisputed guardian, as to altar and sacrifice, of the national worship (II. Kings xxii. 8-10; xxiii. 1, ff., etc.).

Greater, however, than any reforming tendencies to which its standpoint might incidentally give rise, is the profound ethical and religious spirit which pervades the whole discourse, and which makes love to God both the motive of worship and the basis of human action. This is the special glory of the Deuteronomic school, and registers—in combination with other elements to be mentioned presently—the highest point reached in the development of the Yahweh re-

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ligion. The humane and humanising provisions for the stranger and the poor, the widow and orphan, and, in general, for the needy and oppressed, are a worthy attempt to embody in terms of human action the higher conception of the divine. No wonder our Lord's thoughts loved to turn to this book, and to dwell on its familiar words! Prophetism may be said to reach, here, ideally, its culmination and its goal.

The year 621 B.C. is important, not so much for the actual reading of this "book of the law," or the reform set in operation thereby, as for the fact that public expression was given, for the first time, to this higher formulation of the Mosaic ideal, leading to new conceptions of national and individual relations to God. Another crisis was nearing; another great turning point in history; this time in connection with the Chaldeans and Nebuchadnezzar. For the attitude of Isaiah had been justified; the Assyrian had come no more; his power was gone. In the new conditions it fell to the lot of Jeremiah to stand in the breach, in his country's behalf, and interpret the will of God. In the overthrow of Pharaoh at Carchemish he read unerringly the sign of the times for Judah and the world. Safety lay in submission. In proclaiming this unpalatable truth he ranged against himself all who felt they had any interest at stake in the nation, and gained for himself the name and treatment of a traitor. But his message could not be modified. The decree had gone forth. The die was cast. And in fighting the prophet, and playing false, Judah simply hastened her doom. The result was the land was invaded, Jerusalem destroyed, and all but the poorest carried to Babylon, as exiles. Thus Judah's national

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existence came to an end (586 B.C.), after having been granted, through the ministrations of her prophets, more than a century's reprieve, following the downfall of her sister in the North (734-722 B.C.).

We have all felt the heart-throb of Jeremiah. No prophet reveals his feelings more. And we now see, in some measure, why. The circumstances in which, perforce, he lived and labored, superadded to a sensitive temperament, conditioned the cast of his appeals, and surcharged them with human emotion. In his hands the individualising and spiritualising of religious conceptions, originating, or at least finding full expression, first, in Deuteronomy, goes on. His well-known calls to repentance point to the true inwardness of religion:

"Now, therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Yahweh your God; and Yahweh will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you . . .

"I have sent also unto you all my servants, the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and your fathers; but ye have not inclined your ear nor hearkened unto me" (Jer. xxvi. 13; xxxv. 15).

Affiliated with this call to individual repentance is the profound conception of the New Covenant written in the heart, in which, in spirituality and profundity of insight, it has been well said, Jeremiah surpasses every other prophet of the Old Testament (Driver).

"Behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, that I will

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make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their hearts will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Yahweh; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Yahweh; for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jer. xxxi. 31, ff.).

Thus we have seen in the writings of the prophets the moral and religious ideal blend in one; and the conception of God, divested of grosser attributes, enlarged and spiritualised, until we have a pure and ethical monotheism. As a corollary to the rôle of a world religion, it is to be noted, there is a gradual change in the relation of the individual to Yahweh. Instead of the nation being the collective representative, standing sponsor for the individual members of the house of Israel, who become sharers in the covenant and its blessings by an external act of incorporation, i.e., by circumcision; instead of the priest being the indispensable mediary between the worshipper and God; the individual Israelite begins to emerge in his own right, distinct from the corporate community, and gaining standing before Yahweh on the ground of his own individual attitude. In other words, under prophetic teaching, the earlier collectivism in religion gives way to individualism; reaching its culminating point in the law of individual responsibility afterwards propounded by Ezekiel (Ezek. xviii. 20).

Before passing to the religious development associated with the Exile, we must take a brief glance at

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one or two of the lesser writings which have not as yet been noticed. These are included among those most interesting little documents, which, from their miniature proportions, have come to be denominated the "minor prophets," in contradistinction to the more elaborate compositions of the "greater prophets"—the expressions, of course, having reference not to the individual men, but their writings. Of these writings Nahum's tiny pamphlet is an illustrious example. It is the sole literary memorial we have of the fate of Nineveh, which occurred some twenty years before the destruction of Jerusalem. Who cannot discern in the fact of its survival something of the mystic influence of the divine immanence in the affairs of men? In force and power of treatment, as he addresses himself to Nineveh's impending fate, Nahum approximates most nearly to Isaiah; and the treatment is worthy of the theme, which is nothing less than the truth of God's moral government of the world. In the superb introduction to the "burden of Nineveh" the prophet combines the two-fold conceptions of God:

"Yahweh is a jealous God and avengeth. . . . Yahweh is slow to anger and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty " (Nahum i. 2-3).

Habakkuk's treatment of the Chaldeans, though written at the time of Jeremiah, shows some points of contrast. For Jeremiah, Judah's sin is the paramount issue, the Chaldeans being regarded as the instrument of divine punishment. Habakkuk directs his attention, not to Judah, but to the Chaldeans, and their downfall, which is brought about by their own

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wickedness. In Jeremiah it is wickedness in God's people that is doomed. In Habakkuk this idea is carried further, in applying the same truth to the Chaldeans, on which ground destiny is held to be determined by character, as the well-known words seek to show: "The righteous shall live by his faith (faithfulness)" (Hab. ii. 4).

Obadiah takes a back glance at Edom's conduct during Judah's time of stress, when Jerusalem was destroyed; and hurls a thunderbolt in connection with the coming Day of Yahweh, which is drawing near. Edom's downfall is retribution for Edom's deeds: "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head" (Ob. 15, 21). So runs the dreadful fate of Edom; whereas Zion is promised help and enlargement, and an established kingdom, evidently restored and reunited, under Yahweh.

In the book of Jonah, which, with its vivid realism, combines the double advantage of a sermon and romance, we are favored with an extension of Jeremiah's teaching touching repentance. The fulfilment of prophecy, after a pronouncement has gone forth, is made conditional on a people's attitude; and a nation's ultimate fate, which is bound up with a nation's conduct, will depend on whether or not a nation can be induced to repent. Thus God's gracious purposes are carried beyond the bounds of Israel, and made to apply to the heathen as well. This is a universalism of the spirit on which the gospel can build; a universalism which manifests gracious consideration for both man and beast (Jonah iii. 10; iv. 11; cf. Gen. vi. 6-7).

CHAPTER IX.

EXILIC DEVELOPMENT.

EZEKIEL was one of the captives taken to Babylon, or, rather, as he tells us, settled on the banks of the river Chebar. Here he fulfilled his prophetic office under peculiar disabilities, as, from his prophetic eyrie he looked, at a distance, on the impending fall of Jerusalem. He evidently had a painful experience with his compatriots and fellow-exiles, for his explicit declarations as to the coming end of Jerusalem were none too palatable. He did not find that the exile worked in his countrymen the moral change that might have been looked for, and his addresses to them from time to time, are directed accordingly. In the estimation of the surrounding nations, the fall of Jerusalem would, *ipso facto*, immediately lower the majesty of Yahweh, and this would just as certainly react on the exiles themselves. But Ezekiel does not hesitate. In developing the doctrine of individual responsibility for individual sin he wrests victory from seeming defeat, and shows that Jerusalem fell because of Jerusalem's sins; thus vindicating at one and the same time both Yahweh's holiness and power. Not only so, but a similar fate awaits the nations, from the same source, and for the same cause. Thus does the prophet seek to vindicate the honor and majesty

of Yahweh in the eyes both of his countrymen and of the heathen around. Egypt, especially, comes in for attention, as the prophet shows how, on their approaching overthrow, the shades of the Egyptians, in the underworld, will receive an ironical welcome from the shades of other nations whose names have once been a terror, and who have shared a similar fate. (Ezek. xii. 1-20; cf. xviii.; xxxii. 21-31, etc.).

It is to be noted that there were prophets and prophets, in Israel, both before and after the exile—and also prophetesses—and the real were to be distinguished from the false, those who prophesied from the Word of Yahweh, and those who spoke out of their own heart. Predictions were plentiful, for everyone could predict, and this passed for prophecy; hence, with the non-fulfilment of these reputed oracles, the people came to mistrust all prophecy, and to discount the unmistakable prevision on the part of a true prophet who read unerring moral signs. So the real prophet had to take up his parable against the false, as well as against a backsliding and revolting people. Jeremiah had his hands full, in this behalf, and so also had Ezekiel. (Ezek. xiii. 2, ff., etc.; cf. Jer. xiv. 3-15; xxiii. 13-22; xxvi. 7-11, etc.). Ezekiel, it must be confessed, paints the character of Israel in the darkest colors, for Jerusalem is represented as sinking lower than Sodom. (Ezek. xvi. 44-52; but see the whole chapter).

The night before he received tidings of Jerusalem's downfall, the prophet was in a trance—which, in fact, is rather a strong feature in Ezekiel, but less conspicuous in others. (Cf. Isa. viii. 11; Jer. xv. 17; II. Kings iii. 15.) In this ecstatic state he was musing

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on his favorite doctrine of individual responsibility, when the news of the downfall impressed him with the duty of again opening his mouth in public. It appears that his statements with regard to Jerusalem had made it possible for him heretofore to hold only private audiences with such as should visit his house; but now that the city was actually fallen—a thing which his fellow-captives previously would not listen to—a change is effected in public attitude. Ezekiel's declarations are justified to the full, and his position as a prophet of Yahweh established. (Ezek. xxxiii. 21-22; cf. iii. 24; etc.) Ezekiel seizes the opportunity to discourse according to the tenor of the familiar thirty-third chapter. In this way he is able publicly, as before privately, to correct the one-sided development of an earlier time, touching responsibility, which had become crystallised in the popular proverb—The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,—with which also Jeremiah had had to deal. (Ezek. xviii. 2; cf. Jer. xxxi. 29-30.) But whereas Jeremiah looks to the future for a remedy, Ezekiel has in mind the interests of the immediate present. Thus, in Ezekiel's law of individual responsibility, do we get the needed counterpart and complement of the earlier conception of hereditary guilt, the two conceptions being, indeed, two aspects of the same truth. (Cf. Ex. xx. 4; xxxiv. 7, where, however, the writer [J] implicitly recognises individual guilt.)

As a result of Ezekiel's view of responsibility, expressed in the familiar words: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 20), we have also the telling appeal: "As I live, saith the Lord Yah-

weh, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11).

True to the laws of consciousness, Ezekiel's visions take shape from temple associations. The famous vision of the wheels within wheels, full of eyes, serves to symbolise the universality of the divine presence. In contrast with Jeremiah, whose favorite title is the God of Israel, God is referred to by Ezekiel, almost uniformly, as Lord Yahweh, a designation in occasional use as far back as Amos. In his awful presence Ezekiel feels himself to be merely a "son of man." (See viii.-xi.; xliii. 2; xliv. 2; cf. Amos iii. 7, 8; Micah i. 2, etc.) Divine action is represented as being determined largely by one great dread—lest his holy Name be profaned. In his people's prospective restoration, or in an act of judgment, his Name is said to be sanctified, i.e., its holiness is vindicated. (Driver: cf. Ezek. xx. 41; xxviii. 22; xxxvi. 23, etc.) In Ezekiel's thought, throughout, it is the power and holiness of God which is dominant. His vision of the dry bones shows how, in reference to Israel, a dead nation can be revived, and once again flourish and grow strong. The solemn attestation of the truth of any statement is found in the use—in all, over fifty times—of the oft-recurring words:

"And ye (or they) shall know that I am Yahweh." (E.g., Ezek. xxxvii. etc.) Ezekiel differs from any of his predecessors in his writing, which betokens artistic ingenuity—reflection and study—in place of the spontaneity of earlier times.

The Jews are in exile in a strange land; the glory

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of their national existence a thing of the past. The iron has entered into their soul. Heroic hearts are not wanting to still stir up the sacred fire, and keep their faith from dying out—some of whom, indeed, like Ezekiel, passed into exile with the rest, while others have been raised up in the land of their captivity. Years have gone, and another generation is taking the place of those who were carried away, to inherit their hard lot and bitter woe. Meanwhile events have moved fast in the world without. Historical and providential elements again combine, and the appearance of Cyrus on the horizon is seized by the prophetic mind as a sign of deliverance at hand. At the psychological moment a prophet stands forth all aflame with prophetic fire, to rally the spirits and rouse the faith of his downtrodden and despairing countrymen; to proclaim, in short, under the Spirit of Yahweh, nothing less than the release of the captives, the opening of prison doors to those who are bound, the year of Yahweh's favor! This was gospel tidings, indeed; but hearts were too bowed to heed, at first, and it tasked all the prophet's unequalled powers of persuasion to bring home to misgiving hearts the message which he felt was burning in his bones. (Isa. lxi. 1, *et seq.*; cf. xlv. 1, ff.; xl. 1, ff.; li. 14; liii. 1; lix. 1, ff.; lxii. 1, etc., etc.)

In this great prophet of the Exile, whose writings have come down to us as classed with those of Isaiah, and grouped under the same name (II. Isaiah), we have a rich development in theistic thought. His ironical descriptions of idols are inimitable, reducing both them and their makers to utter impotence, and thereby the more exalting Yahweh, Israel's God. (Isa.

xliv. 12, ff.; xl. 18, etc.) For him, Yahweh is the Incomparable One. (xlvi. 5, etc.). There is one God, Yahweh, and there is none else. (xlv. 22, etc.) He alone can reveal the future. (Isa. xli. 21-29; cf. Amos iii. 7; Ex. iii. 14.) In the prophet's spacious conception it is God's infinitude that is emphasised. (lvii. 15, etc.) He is the Sustainer of the universe, the author of history, the First and the Last. (xli. 4; xlviii. 21, ff., etc.)

The chief contribution, however, of this prophet to theistic thought is yet to be mentioned. The scourging fires through which the nation had passed—here again historical conditions determining both the form and content—prepared the way for a fuller revelation of the deeper meaning of life and of God's attitude to men. This is taken up into the prophet's thought in his profound delineation of God's great principle of vicarious sacrifice, illustrated in this instance in the sufferings of Israel. The pleading pathos, the intense human emotion, with which, taking over and amplifying Jeremiah's expression, he portrays Yahweh's Ideal Servant, has ever taken deep hold of the religious consciousness of men. Yahweh's Suffering Servant, smitten and afflicted, suffering for sins not his own—who can read these touching personifications without being strangely stirred? So profound is his spiritual insight, so unerring his portrayal of the sufferings of pious Israel, the Servant of God (Isa. xlv. 2; xlv. 4, etc.), that later generations have had no difficulty in transferring his thought bodily, and applying his language to the sacred person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The remarkable thing is, that the eternal elements in

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the prophet's conception apply, and apply fully, only to Christ. The seer's vision carries farther than the seer saw! Nothing higher remains to be revealed till we come to the Incarnation, God manifest in the flesh.

It is not difficult to understand how the pathetic consciousness of the mystery of suffering would perplex the ancient mind. Ever and anon, in the thought of the pious, the question is agitated, Why do the wicked flourish, and the righteous are cut down?—contrary to the moral fitness of things, and traversing the naive conceptions of earlier times. It comes as a shock to the pious imagination of men accustomed to regard worldly prosperity as the sure concomitant of eminent piety. Painfully the pious imagination struggles with this world-old problem; and it is to these struggles that we owe some of our choicest possessions. In the earlier prophetic activity, the individual aspect had not as yet emerged in a form to trouble the prophetic consciousness; which is content to deal, rather, with the general question of the origin of evil—as we see in the third chapter of Genesis, with its delightful anthropomorphisms, and groundtone of childlike, trusting simplicity. But with the historic development of Israel as a people, the individual question could not but come up, at some time, in an acute form, as we plainly see, e.g., in the Psalms, to have been the case. At a comparatively late stage we have the immortal epic of Job, with its first conscious glimmering of immortality, dealing with the whole case of concrete individual suffering, in the life-history of a human soul. Between the two extremes lies practically the whole prophetic régime. These varied utterances, born of living experience,

wrung out of living human hearts, are incorporated with strains of song in Israel's unique collection of devotional compositions, to which we shall presently turn for a further contribution to our study of the revelation of God.

Meanwhile, let us be grateful. The world is under a heavy debt to these ancient worthies of God, for the rich treasures which have come down to us, in their name, as result of the unwearied exercise of the prophetic imagination. Their varied writings constitute, beyond all comparison, the first and foremost of the world's religious classics, incomparably superior to other classics in ethical content, and the one imperishable classic of the common people.

CHAPTER X.

THE SWEET SINGERS OF ISRAEL.

ISRAEL'S religious development was shared by another order of men, closely akin to the prophets, many of whom, indeed, were prophets—the sweet singers of Israel—psalmists and poets who exercised themselves in song and story, and thought aloud for the benefit of those who should come after. The pathetic record of their struggles is writ large in prayer and plaint, so that he who runs may read. These plaints and pleadings, heart-piercing cries and confessions of sin, mingle with bursts of adoration and praise, triumph and jubilation. In their outpourings of soul they add their contribution to Messianic conceptions, and in their very humanness merge past, present and future in one. In their thought the Day of Yahweh takes up additional elements, which have ever been dear to the heart of the devout,—in anticipation of the coming Deliverer. Not only did their language furnish fit expression for the longings and aspirations of pious Israel, but the devotion of succeeding generations has been glad to kindle its torch at their flame. Congregations gathered for worship in the second temple voiced their ingenuous utterances as their own, and the accumulated treasures of the Psalter ultimately passed over as a heritage to the Christian Church.

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These compositions, it must be remembered, both in separate collections, of which we have traces in the present divisions, and in combined form, comprised the Jewish Hymnal. In their production they cover centuries, and exhibit in the form of religious experience the whole religious development of the prophetic *régime*. Here and there a voice from remote antiquity breaks in upon the ear. For the rest, we have memorials of the crises and great occasions in Israel's history. Memories of the Monarchy are embalmed in song, as well as reminiscences of the time when the heathen were in possession of the land, the temple desecrated, and the holy city in ruins. Exile and Return each finds fit commemoration, the one to the accompaniment of tears, and heartbreaking sighs and sobs, the other in jubilant strains at the thought of standing once again on Israel's ancestral land. Fresh occasions for plaint and triumph are found in the Maccabean struggles, nor does the Hebrew gift of song cease with the dawn of the Christian age.

This vast range, both in time and religious development, gives to the Psalter its unique religious value, adjusting it to the requirements of successive ages and widely differing minds. The personal note, so indispensable in a hymnal, is constantly present. Here are no deliberate compositions of the speculative mind, no made-up compilations, but the spontaneous utterances growing out of the living experiences of men. All undesignedly, by reason of their unpremeditatedness and the eternal element running through the whole, they serve to set forth the process of the Living Word, which came not by the will of man but by the Will of God.

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Among such ingenuous utterances it is but natural that we should find such primitive conceptions as those, e.g., of the Storm God bestriding a Cherub, and riding upon the wings of the Wind, presented in the superb imagery of the 18th Psalm. In this psalm, Yahweh is characteristically set forth as the God of Battles:

“He teacheth my hands to war;

So that mine arms do bend a bow of brass. . . .”

a refrain that matches the earlier strain of the Song of Moses (Ex. xv. 3). The thought of God as a Rock runs through the psalm, as also a Shield and Deliverer.

With this before us it is not difficult to enter into the viewpoint of the latter part of the 24th Psalm—possibly one of the oldest fragments in the psalter—dealing with Yahweh’s entry into Jerusalem, in connection with the bringing in of the ark:

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors;

And the King of Glory (glorious king) will come in.

Who is the King of Glory (glorious king)?

Yahweh, Strong and Mighty, Yahweh, Mighty in Battle.

(Yahweh, the Mighty One, the Hero; Yahweh, the Hero in War.)

Who is this King of Glory (glorious king)?

Yahweh of Hosts, He is the King of Glory (glorious king).”

A refrain that also suggests the earlier strain of the Song of Moses (Ex. xv. 3).

We are now prepared to understand how the wars of Yahweh could constitute the central theme in Israel’s earliest collection of songs (Num. xxi. 14). And we shall probably not find it too difficult to account for the pitiless note of exultation in the

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ancient Song of Deborah, over the defeat of Sisera (Judges v.). The farther we could go back, probably the more frankly outspoken would be the Warrior conception of God.

This is all very human. God is thought of in the likeness of men. By such primitive touches do these utterances betray their early origination. Other primitive presentations, charming in their childlike simplicity, picture God as sleeping (Ps. xliv. 23, etc.), or as having removed himself far beyond reach of the suppliant's cry (Ps. xxii. 1). Yahweh's overpowering majesty is not overlooked, and many a psalm ascribes glory to his great and terrible Name. Idols, also, are ridiculed in the very terms of II. Isaiah (Ps. cxv., cxxxv.). In more than one majestic outburst, Israel's God is hymned as the creator of the universe, the King of the whole earth (Ps. xcvi. 5; xlvii. 2; xix. 1; cxlvi. 6, etc.).

The idea of God as everlasting comes to utterance in the sublime language of the oft-quoted 90th Psalm:

“ Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.”

Yahweh, of course, is the covenant God of Israel, signified by the personal Revelation Name (Ps. xli. 13; lxxii. 18; cvi. 48). The prophetic imagination delights to set him forth as ever-mindful of his people's welfare, and attentive to their cry:

“ Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Yahweh pitieth them that fear him,
For he knoweth our frame,
He remembereth that we are dust.”

(Ps. ciii. 13-14; cf. lxxxvi. 15; lxxvii. 7-8.)

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On this ground the pious in Israel were accustomed to reassure themselves in him in all the vicissitudes of life. Yahweh's omniscience and omnipotence are emphasised, and the psalmist falls asleep thinking of it all, only to wake to think of it still, though the wonder of it all is beyond him. God knows him altogether—when he sits down, when he rises, what he thinks, what he says, and where he goes. He cannot escape God (Ps. cxxxix.). The thought of Yahweh occupies him in the silent watches of the night (Ps. lxiii. 6). Sometimes the thought of God fills their soul with sadness and covers their spirit with gloom, as they remember the days of old. On such occasions, troubled and speechless, they commune with themselves, and raise the agonising question whether the Lord will cast them off forever, will he be gracious no more? (Ps. lxxvii. 8):

“Is his lovingkindness clean gone forever?
Doth his promise fail forevermore?
Hath God forgotten to be gracious? (quaint turn of
thought).
Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?”

Like others, occasionally they fancy their prosperity will never be disturbed, only to be disillusioned (Ps. xxx. 6—Maccabees, 165 B.C.). When the folly of putting confidence in princes is all too apparent, they comfort themselves with the thought of Yahweh's unfailing care (Ps. cxlvi.).

In the minds of the singers of Israel, God is brought into conjunction with everything. We have seen more than one exultant recognition of him as the hero in battle, making onslaughts on the enemy, with no

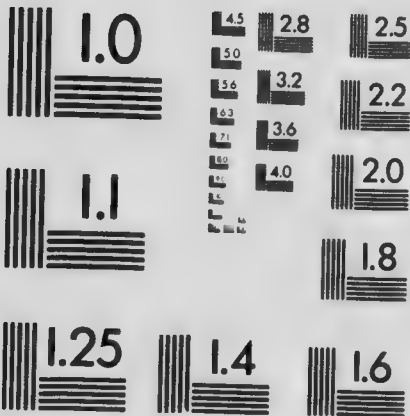
thought of ethical incongruity. War poetry abounds, all conceived in this warrior spirit of Yahweh. Battle songs, however, by no means represent the sole repertoire of the singers of Israel. We have banquet songs (good and bad, i.e., idle songs—Isa. xvi. 10; xxiv. 9; Ps. lxix. 12, and many places; cf. Luke xv. 25), and funeral dirges (Lam., etc.), and one exquisite specimen of an Eastern marriage song (Ps. xlv.), of such superlative beauty that it constantly invites a secondary interpretation. The Song of Songs is simply a love song, thoroughly Oriental in conception and execution, but by no means destitute of ethical content, inasmuch as the design is to raise a monument in praise of constancy. People sang at their occupations, as is suggested by the snatch of song which we have in the Song of the Well (Num. xxi. 17-18). Lamech sounds a note of triumph over the discovery of metal weapons, which carries us a long way back in Israel's thoughts (Gen. iv. 23-24). Friendship claims poetic recognition, a beautiful illustration of which we have in the lyrical lament of David over Saul and Jonathan, preserved in the book of Jashar, and taken over by the compiler of Samuel (II. Sam. i. 19-27).

Under extreme pressure, imprecations are not uncommon; but as in battle songs, there is no thought of incongruity. They have been wrung out of the outraged Hebrew heart, and voice not so much individual as national wrongs (Ps. cxxxvii., lviii., lix., lxix., cix., lxxxiii.). A single illustration will serve to show the spirit in which the later Israelites waged war with those concerned in violating all that they held sacred, as regards worship and home:



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"Everywhere heathen swarmed round us like bees, and blazed about us like a fire of thorns; but in the Name of Yahweh we cut them down!" (Ps. cxviii. 12: McFadyen.)

Put with this the recollections of the time when, in a heathen land, they were reduced to extremity, the sport of their cruel captors. Their pitiful condition, when they hung their harps on the willows, and wept by the waters of Babylon, refusing to respond to the mocking demands for a song, finds pathetic expression in the 137th Psalm:

"For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion!
How shall we sing Yahweh's Song
In a foreign land?"

As the thought of the indignities to which they were subjected burns into their brains, the returned exiles break out into the awful execration:

"Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones
Against the rock!"

In this passionate outburst we see the connection supposed to exist between the god and the land. The Hebrew limitations in the thought of God are all too apparent. Yet the fierce protest is perfectly intelligible. It is not the language of profane lips, but the hot heart-cry wrung out of pious souls. Their suffocating sense of wrong centres not so much in their personal indignities, as in the awful shock sustained by their religious susceptibilities at the blasphemous offering to the sacred Name.

God is very real to these psalmists of old. They

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delight to reflect on his works and ways in nature and history. The heavens declare the glory of God! (Ps. xix.). The works of creation are celebrated in a magnificent creation Psalm (civ.). Israel's national career is the never-failing theme of many jubilant outbursts (lxxviii., cv. cvi.). In one psalmist's exalted conception the earth is full of his kindness, and his love is as old as creation (xxxiii. 5-6). The folly of denying God in human affairs is more than once insisted on (Ps. xiv., liii.). When they strike the harp to the vanity and pathos of life it is the softer cadences that are called forth, breaking at times into a wail, and ending at length in a sigh (Ps. xxxix., etc.).

Social injustice distresses the soul of these ancient worthies of God. The rich man with vast wealth, the man full of cunning and wickedness—who are not plagued like other men, whose eyes stand out with fatness, who have more than heart can wish—are a riddle to them as to us (Ps. lxxiii. 5-7.) But the fate of such is not reassuring—they are set in slippery places, and their triumph is brief (Ps. xlix., lxxiii.). Sometimes the faith of these pious souls well-nigh totters, as they see how well the godless braggarts fare; sometimes, worn out with thinking out a solution, they have retired to the house of God, and there the illuminating truth has flashed in on their mind (Ps. lxxiii.). At other times, driven almost to distraction with doubt, they are led to wonder whether Yahweh can be the accomplice of a royal villain, who legalises iniquity:

“Which frameth mischief by statute!” (Ps. xciv. 20).

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How modern it all seems! How close it brings their times to ours!

In this manifold way does the religion of Israel, technically spoken of as the Fear of Yahweh (Ps. xix. 9, etc.), work itself out in the religious consciousness of these ancient men of faith. For them the pangs and poignancy of the common lot are no strange experience. Tears, for one reason and another, have been, on different occasions, their meat day and night (Ps. xlii. 3; vi. 6). The agonising heartbreak over a false friend extorts the cry, which is taken up in a new connection in later times:

“Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,
Who did eat of my bread,
Hath lifted up his heel against me!” (Ps. xli. 9; cf. John xiii. 18).

“For it was not an enemy that reproached me;
Then I could have borne it.
Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself
against me;
Then I would have hid myself from him,
But it was thou, a man mine equal,
My companion, and my familiar friend!
We took sweet counsel together;
We walked to the house of God with the throng.” (Ps. lv. 12-14.)

Not only have they been requited evil for good, but quivering under some stroke of calamity they have had “strangers” gather gleefully together and mock their grief (Ps. xxxv. 15). They have been sore pressed in spirit so as to offer the prayer:

“O pity us, pity us, our God; for we have tasted

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enough of the bitterness of scorn; enough of the contempt of the proud that are at ease " (Ps. cxxiii. 3: McFadyen).

Their sore plight on occasion is seen in the piteous plaint:

"Like the clods turned over by the plow, our bones are scattered on the ground, ready to be devoured by the greedy jaws of the underworld" (Ps. cvli. 7: McFadyen).

The cry has been wrung from their heart:

"How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach?
Shall the enemy blaspheme thy Name forever?" (Ps. lxxiv. 10).

These experiences, it must be remembered, were sometimes individual and sometimes collective. In the latter case, the pious singer simply individualises his country's woes. The great point to note is, that throughout their experiences, in all their varied lot, the ancient saints of God found the religion of Yahweh satisfying. In their approaches to God they were permitted a sacred intimacy, an affecting nearness of intercourse and trusting confidence, which makes them the companions of all those in all times who walk by faith. Central in their thought, perceived with more or less clearness on the part of the devout, was the deeper teaching of prophetism, the gracious truth which is at the very heart of revelation, which is expressed in the immortal words of the 51st Psalm:

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

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It is easy to see that the ignominy suffered by pious Israel in exile, as well as before and after, would lend itself to extended signification. As the sob goes up from the afflicted soul, their words seem strangely suggestive of other occasions and other times, when the Man of Galilee gathered up in His bosom the woes of the world; nor could His soul find fitter language than theirs with which to express His own sore grief. Witness the heart-startling cry, taken up on the cross:

"My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. xxii. 1; cf. Matt. xxvii. 46). Old language with a new meaning! And so of other occasions in connection with which New Testament writers apply Old Testament language to New Testament times.

To these suffering servants of God, and to pious Israel in general, the rule of Yahweh was the *summum bonum*. Their outreachings of desire for Yahweh's universal dominion blend easily and naturally, and enter vitally, into the New Testament conception of Messiah's sway. The psalmists' pious interest in the theocratic king and kingdom leads them to use language which after-times can fitly employ in another connection, namely, with the coming, in the higher sense, of the Kingdom of God. In this way we are to understand the apostolic method in their choice of selections from the Old Testament for New Testament treatment. They carefully discard what is merely local, and infallibly choose that utterance which has a universal element, and so goes, naturally, to the very root of the matter. In this way, we are to understand the use made of the 2nd Psalm and others by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews:

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"Yahweh said unto me, Thou art my son,

This day have I begotten thee." . . .

"Thou art a priest forever,

After the order of Melchisedek" (Ps. cx. 4; cf. Heb. v. 5, 6).

Only, it will be noted, that here again the LXX has come to their help, as indeed its influence in general has affected their whole interpretation.

One of the most familiar thought forms of the psalmists, primitive in its derivation, indicating its local origin, and persisting through later stages, is that which regards God as a Rock,—already referred to. The very symbolism of permanence secures its survival (Ps. xviii. 2; xix. 14., etc.; cf. I. Sam. ii. 2; II. Sam. xxiii. 3, etc.). The thought of God as a Living God is also expressed (Ps. xlii. 2). In the later times, the thought of God as creator of heaven and earth constantly recurs, as e.g., in the 21st Psalm:

"My help cometh from Yahweh,
Who made heaven and earth."

There is a clear recognition that He is invisible, his home being in the heavens (Ps. cxv. 3; cf. I. Kings viii. 27-30). In these later phases of the Yahweh religion, when the worshippers' conceptions escape the cruder localisms, we are constantly introduced to language which could serve for purposes of highest Christian worship, and which, indeed, from the dawn of the Christian era, has actually supplied the needs of the Christian church. Instance only Ps. lxvii., the Venite (Ps. xcv.), and the Jubilate Deo (Ps. c.), which are all regularly used for just such devotional purposes

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So charged is the psalter with the spirit of devotion, that Christendom has not been content with making individual selections, but has appropriated the whole collection for the purposes of her own hymnology. An atmosphere is felt to pervade these productions in such sort as to make them instinct with the presence of God, not only rendering them suited for worship, but in some strange way marking them off,—as indeed the scriptures in general,—from the literary productions of other races, whose hopes do not centre in the Unseen.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRIEST AND THE PROPHET.

IN our survey thus far, all imperfect as it is, we have seen a continual spiritualising in the conception of God in the gradual unfolding of revelation. If at first the God of Israel is tacitly thought to coexist with other gods, ultimately other gods shrink into nothingness, and the God of Israel becomes in thought as well as fact the God of heaven and earth. The bald localising of God in connection with local shrines gives way to worthier conceptions of the divine. His religion is viewed as the possible possession of all the nations of the earth. During the process, long by human computation, but according to the years of history, which are the years of God, marvellously short,—for nothing can be truer, taking a world view, than that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day (II. Pet. iii. 8),—the eternal element is seen more and more disentangling itself from the temporal, until the cruder accompaniments measurably disappear.

Concurrently with this phase of the development there is another which must be taken into account, in which the human element gains at the expense of the divine. The one is connected with the prophet, and the other with the priest. The priestly development, which was given a large impetus by the erection of

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the temple, in place of the shepherd tent, tends more and more, in its elaborate ceremonialism, to obscure the true idea of God. The simple and joyful sacrifices of earlier times, in which the individual worshipper enters into communion with God, gives way to a complex system of ceremonial observance, of which the outstanding characteristic is the immense slaughter of animals. The priesthood itself, whose sacred obligations inhered at first in the head of the house, or clan, passes through various transitions into a privileged caste. Contrast, e.g., the simple condition of things which obtained in the early monarchy (I. Sam. ix. 12-13; cf. ii. 13, etc.),—not to mention the more or less indeterminate period of the “judges,” or later times (See Judges and Kings, *passim.*),—with the elaborate arrangements given by the priestly writer in Leviticus. This excessive priestly tendency culminates in the work of the Chronicler late in Israel’s career, who rewrites the whole of Israel’s history from the standpoint of the priest. Between this extreme priestly development, embodied, in substance, in what has been called the Priests’ Code, preserved, for the most part, in Leviticus and Numbers, and the simple provisions of the earlier Book of the Covenant previously referred to (Ex. xx. 22—xxiii. 33 [E]), comes practically the whole priestly régime.

It is no part of the present purpose to trace the priestly development in detail, but one or two points of comparison may be indicated, to show that the elaborate ceremonial requirements did not spring into existence all at once, but followed the same law of growth exhibited in the parallel development of

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prophetism. The simple requirements in the Book of the Covenant have already been referred to. The regulations and point of view embodied in this earliest code (JE) base, doubtless, on customs which obtained from time immemorial in Israel's national career, tracing back directly to practices instituted by Moses himself, and now, with the accumulation of priestly Thoroth, erected into a connected body of law. The priest, in the early stages of the national career, was the one, naturally, who rendered decisions and pronounced judgments on all matters pertaining to ceremonial requirements. The very name used for these "judgments"—Thoroth, plural of Thorah—reveals their origin, signifying "pointing out"; and such priestly Thoroth, or pointings out, would include necessary instruction as well as ceremonial directions. The earliest code is virtually a digest of these various judgments which had been given from time to time, and which had become crystallised in practice. For the most part, they betray a primitive cast throughout.

After the monarchy, and the erection of the temple, a new condition of things obtained; and when things had run their course, it was reserved for some great prophet soul, penetrated through and through with the Spirit of Yahweh, to reformulate the whole Mosaic economy in a way that at the same time was both consonant with the more exalted conception of God and suited to the times. This is what is done in Deuteronomy. But as in the Book of the Covenant, so in the Deuteronomic Code, the ceremonial requirements are but an expansion of what has previously come down, with, of course, the addition of further

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Thoroath. No hard and fast lines are drawn, as yet, between the priests and the Levites, the priesthood being still open to every member of the tribe of Levi (Deut. xviii. 1, 6-8); but the priest, as distinguished from the Levite, is fast coming to be in the ascendant, a tendency which was furthered by the movement for centralised worship (doing away with the scattered local shrines and high places), and by the downfall of the Northern kingdom.

Related to the Deuteronomic Code, in spirit, is the well-known Law of Holiness, incorporated in Leviticus, the work of some priestly-prophet, with which Ezekiel, also a priestly-prophet, shows affinities, and from which he frequently quotes (Lev. xvii.-xxvi.; cf. Ezek., *passim*). In comparison with the Book of the Covenant, which is concerned rather with the civil side, the Law of Holiness deals more with the ceremonial side of an Israelite's life, as well as more in detail; but in both cases the commands are addressed, for the most part, to the people, not the priest, as, of course, is also the case in Deuteronomy.

As already indicated, the Deuteronomic presentation had an enormous influence on the later prophetic development, as can be seen by the prophetic writings, e.g., Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Deutero-Isaiah, and the compilations of Judges, Kings, etc. It was the one standard by which everything came to be measured. Priestly and prophetic elements interpenetrate, but in such a way that the whole production is imbued with the prophetic spirit. With the exercise of the prophetic function, it had become a question, by the time of Deuteronomy, as to how to recognise the true prophet, and a very effective test is given, namely, as

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to whether or not what is advanced by the prophet actually comes to pass (Deut. xviii. 21-22). By this time, also, the Mazzebah, or obelisk, which Isaiah had used to symbolise the ultimate conversion of Egypt to the faith of Israel, had, in the prophetic judgment, come under the ban, as no longer having affinities with the true inwardness of religion (Deut. xvi. 22; cf. Isa. xix. 19); much in the same way as the early local shrines had come to outlive their usefulness (Deut. xii. 13-14; xiv. 23; II. Kings xviii. 4; xxi. 3; xxii.-xxiii.; cf. Josh. xxiv. 26; I. Sam. vii. 17; ix. 12; x. 8; II. Sam. xv. 12, 32, etc., not to mention instances specially associated with theophanies). The most important difference between the standpoint of Deuteronomy and the earlier code is to be found in the law of the central sanctuary (Deut. xii. 1-28; cf. Ex. xx. 24, etc.). Here the pre-eminence originally attaching to a place associated with the presence of the Ark, attains, in the case of the hill of Zion, a permanence which has the full endorsement of the prophetic judgment as best making for the higher interests of religion.

One outcome of the abolition of the high places, and consequent emphasis on the central sanctuary, promoted by Deuteronomy, was the distinction which it conferred on the Jerusalem priesthood, and which resulted in a virtual supremacy. For it must be remembered that the priests and Levites associated in the functions pertaining to the local shrines, were now, by their abolition, without occupation and without status. This tendency in favor of the temple priests carried with it, evidently, the approval of Ezekiel; for in laying down the law for the restored

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community, he limits the priesthood proper to the sons of Zadok, giving as the reason that they had been loyal to Yahweh in the matter of the high places; whereas the rest of the Levites, who had exercised priestly functions in connection with such high places, were to be reduced to the position of temple assistants. In actual practice, however, in the restored community, this did not strictly obtain; inasmuch as we find, as late as the Chronicler, descendants of Ithamar still officiating side by side with the sons of Zadok (Ezek. xliv. 10-16; xlviii. 11; cf. I. Chron. xxiv. 4, etc.).

All this is presupposed when we come to the next later development in the priestly order. This finds embodiment in a much more elaborate codification of priestly Thoroth than we have as yet come across, and which, in this approximately completed stage, has not inaptly been called the Priests' Code, inasmuch as the whole range of priestly relations are dealt with in detail. Here we have the full effect of the abolition of high places and the centralising of worship. In this complete code, which, apparently, bases on previous collections of Thoroth quite independently of Deuteronomy, and with which are incorporated earlier digests, as e.g., the Law of Holiness, the priestly element is predominant. In contrast with the earlier codes, the commands are addressed to the priest, not the people. The distinction between priests and ordinary Levites, already begun in Ezekiel, is now sharply drawn, and in dealing with the Mosaic institutions these distinctions are thrown back into the earliest *régime* (Num. xviii. 1-20, etc.),—in complete contrast with the practice which actually obtained, as we have

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seen, as late as David. This, however, is both natural and inevitable, inasmuch as ceremonial as well as national institutions originate with Moses, and the complete Priests' Code is but a further expansion of original Mosaic institutions, determined by the accumulated priestly Tradition, and adapted to the needs of the later time. This ancient tendency to project the present into the past, and so bring about a unification of conception,—a process already seen on the part of the same writer (P), as well as others (J) in dealing with the conception of God,—is carried to completion in the Chronicler. In idealising the past, he represents the Priests' Code as being observed in its entirety from the very beginning; and thus, as stated, rewrites the whole of Israel's history from the standpoint of the priest (See Chronicles, *passim*, in contrast with Kings).

In this almost unavoidable priestly development, we may still distinguish, at the heart of it, a divine element, commingling with the human, as in the parallel development of prophetism. But whereas in the prophetic development externalism is reduced to a minimum, and the eternal element escapes more and more from what is merely local and temporal; in the other case, externalism is essentially a predominating feature, and temporal and local elements constantly gain at the expense of the divine. Not that at any time the priestly function is wholly divorced from the divine idea; since in the religious training of a primitive people symbolism and ceremonialism would seem to be absolutely indispensable for the inculcation of religious truth, teaching, as it were, by object lessons,—a process which may be ultimately outgrown,

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but which, even so, may still meet a felt want and prove an invaluable aid in helping to shape the thought-forms of later generations. But whenever the end is lost in the means; whenever, as in the history of Israel, there is a disposition to substitute ceremonial for moral obedience; then immediately religious observance, in its external aspects, and therewith the whole priestly function, becomes hostile to the true knowledge of God.

Accordingly, as we would expect, the prophets place themselves in an attitude of uncompromising opposition to all such tendencies to substitute ceremonial for moral obedience. Their burning utterances in this behalf ring out both in pre-exilic and post-exilic times. As far back as the written memoirs of the times of Samuel it was indicated that to obey was better than sacrifice (I. Sam. xv. 21). When we come to the literary prophets the whole emphasis is on moral righteousness. Nothing could be more explicit than the language of Amos:

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. . . .

"Did ye bring unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?" (Amos v. 21-25).

Equally unequivocal is the attitude of the prophet greatest in Israel's history, to wit, Isaiah, in the Great Arraignment:

"Hear, the word of Yahweh. . . . What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Yahweh.

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I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . .

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. i. 10-17).

In still bolder terms speaks Jeremiah, the prophet immediately preceding the exile—who saw the destruction of the temple,—and who actually declares that Yahweh never gave any commandment to sacrifice at all; which is all the more remarkable, considering the fact that he was himself of priestly descent:

"For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Harken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (Jer. vii. 22-23; cf. Isa. i. 12).

Consonant with this is the immortal utterance of the prophet-soul who has passed his days, probably, in exile, and who, on his return, offers up, in behalf of Israel, confession of sin:

"Thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it;
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. li. 16-17).

With the exile, the priestly development, of necessity, received, in some respects, a check; since there

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was neither place nor opportunity for sacrifice on a large scale, if at all. Not that there was any likelihood of the priestly element disappearing from Israel's history. On the contrary, on the Return, and erection of the second temple, there is naturally a revival of priestly rites; and in connection with Herod's temple, as we know, the priestly function was in full force. Moreover, in connection with the Diaspora, we have independent evidence to show that, as far as Upper Egypt, there was an attempt at a replica of the temple *régime*. And, finally, the priestly class—now constituted a rigid caste—at the time of our Lord, under the Roman jurisdiction, virtually ruled Jerusalem in matters of religion.

With the Return, now that the earlier magnificence is no more, there is a tendency to idealise the past, as regards the temple ministrations, and to attribute the fully developed ceremonial, in a greatly expanded form, to the earliest times. This tendency, as one indirect result of the Babylonian captivity, will explain, in part, the elaboration of the Priests' Code, and its incorporation in the priestly writer's (P) account of the origin of the theocratic institutions of Israel, and the events which led to Israel's establishment in Canaan. Similar reasons, on the part of others, in view of the present pitiful condition of the Jewish people, compared with the past, in the land of their national exploits, would lead, as elsewhere intimated, unconsciously to the idealising of the Davidic king and kingdom. One other result of the Babylonian captivity remains to be noticed, and that a very important one. What the persuasive eloquence of Deuteronomy failed to accomplish, with all its sublime

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conceptions of God,—namely, the uprooting of idolatry from the heart of the people,—was effected by the stern discipline of exile. From the time of the Return idolatry in Israel is no more.

The prophets, then, are the foremost to distinguish between mere ceremonialism and the eternal obligations of moral and social rectitude. Circumcision continues to be maintained as the external rite of initiation into the community of Israel, but with the prophets the emphasis is laid on the circumcision of the heart (Jer. iv. 4). They know how to distinguish between the mere inhabitant of Zion and the true citizen (Ps. xv.). They unfailingly and unceasingly insist on spiritual worship (Ps. xxiv. 1-6; li., etc.).

The effect of the exile, then, was felt in the two directions intimated; it put a check, as stated, on the priestly development; and it also did away with the opportunity for localism in religion. When there was no longer a temple, and worshippers were dispersed, the presence of God could no longer be associated with any given country or any given place. The God that filled heaven and earth was under no necessity to dwell in temples made with hands. So, in effect, spake Jeremiah (xxiii. 24), and so likewise spake Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. lxvi. 1-2; cf. Acts vii. 48).

To this emphatic assertion, Deutero-Isaiah, in addressing the exiles, joins another, the substance of which appears again and again, but which may well be given, once more, in his words:

“To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose Name is Holy: I dwell in

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the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isa. lvii. 15).

In harmony with this is the thought of one of the psalmists, as late probably as the Maccabees:

"For though Yahweh is high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly;

But the haughty he knoweth from afar" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6).

Occasionally a prophet is a priest, as in the case of Ezekiel. In such case his thinking is colored by his calling. It is quite natural, for instance, that Ezekiel's interest should centre in a reconstructed temple and restored theocracy, and that his thought-forms should be determined by temple environment. So far, then, we are justified in recognising that his priestly calling gives cast to his conceptions, but without detracting from his prophetic message. In showing that the individual sinner will suffer for his individual sin, the prophet triumphs over the priest (Ezek. xviii. 4, etc.).

CHAPTER XII.

LATER PHASES OF PROPHECY.

DEUTERO-ISAIAH was not alone in witnessing to the approaching termination of the exile. At least two other prophets have left behind memorials of their prophetic activity in this behalf, whose writings will be found incorporated, on account of subject matter and style, with those of Isaiah and Jeremiah, respectively (Isa. xii.-xiv.; Jer. l.-li.). Both testify to the impending overthrow of Babylon, which will issue in the Jews' release. In the former case the Medes are regarded as the instrument of deliverance; in the latter case Cyrus joins forces with the Medes. Each speaks of the utter desolation that will ensue, as he reads in the internal conditions of Babylon all too plainly the signs of doom. In the latter case there is manifested such a spirit of exultation over the contemplated downfall as to argue that the writer was one of those who, in exile, had drunk deeply of the bitter cup of sufferings. The manifesto is a positive incitement to revolt, and therein differs totally from the counsels which reason and religion combined to urge in the time of Jeremiah. The documents are interesting to us, not for any special theological views, but because they recognise the approaching hour of release, which was accomplished, in due course, by the capture of Babylon (538 B.C.). Two years later,

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by the edict of Cyrus (536 B.C.), the Jews were granted permission to return to Jerusalem, and to take with them the sacred vessels carried away by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra i.).

Sixteen years elapsed after the Return before any effective attempt appears to have been made looking to the restoration of the temple. Haggai then appears on the scene as one of the chief instigators in this behalf, aided by Zechariah, with the result that within four years the work was done (Ezra v. 1, ff.). That the Second Temple would prove to be a rallying point for the faith and aspirations of the devout in the restored Israel goes without saying. Without involving any of the cruder aspects of localism, it would still serve to symbolise the presence of Yahweh in the midst of the people. The place which, in point of fact, it came to fill in the religious life of the pious, is borne witness to by many compositions in the Psalter, as well as by successive compilations that were made, from time to time, before the Psalter attained its present shape. On the other hand, the Second Temple also doubtless served as a rallying point for the priests, and consequently was responsible indirectly for the final codification of laws which goes to make up the Priests' Code in its present shape, and which registers the complete separation of the priests, as a class, from the people.

The contrast between the two structures, Solomon's and Zerubbabel's, to those who had seen the former, was heartbreaking (Ezra iii. 12). In affirming, therefore, that the glory of the latter house will exceed that of the former, it is evident that Haggai cannot have in mind mere externals, however the temple

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might come to be enriched by Gentile offerings, but must be also projecting his view into the future, ideally:

"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Yahweh of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Yahweh of hosts" (Hag. ii. 9).

On this account his miniature manifesto can also contribute its quota to New Testament thought (Hag. ii. 6; cf. Heb. xii. 26). Similarly with his contemporary, Zechariah, who, in placing emphasis on the observance of moral commands rather than fasts, is but endorsing former prophets (Zech. vii. 2-10; cf. Isa. lviii. 5, ff., etc.). His view of the place of the Jew in the Messianic days to come, is, to say the least, somewhat exalted, and can only be rightly interpreted by having due regard to Oriental imagery, and to that deeper signification to which, in the prophetic thought, such imagery ever lends itself:

"In those days. . . . ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii. 23). Yahweh of hosts is the favorite phrase both of Haggai and Zechariah.

Joel is concerned specially with the approaching Day of Yahweh. In this instance, a dreadful visitation of locusts and drought gives the prophet his cue. Worse is to follow; but repentance brings a gracious change in Yahweh's purpose; rain is promised, bringing fruitful seasons; and the upshot is to be that all will know that Yahweh is Israel's God. After this the prophetic spirit is to be poured out on all flesh, and the Day of Yah-

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weh will then draw near—a day of dreadful terror for the enemies of the Jews and those who do not trust in Yahweh,—which incidentally gave Peter his quotation at Pentecost (Joel. ii. 28, ff.; cf. Acts ii. 17, ff.). For us, Joel is important for the splendid summing up which he gives of the messages of many predecessors, in the pointed charge:

“Rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Yahweh your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offering and a drink offering unto Yahweh your God?” (Joel ii. 13-14,—referring to the result of recovery from drought). In his call to repentance Joel keeps in mind the distinction between Israel and the nations. Israel is to be saved in event of response; but the nations gathered together for judgment in the valley of Jehoshaphat are to be destroyed (Joel ii. 32; cf. iii. 12). This carries us back to an earlier point of view, and is probably nothing less than a readaptation of older prophecies to the needs of later times.

Included among the writings grouped under the name of Zechariah is one of later date which, in its Messianic forecasts, speaks of prophets in such a way as to make it appear that the prophetic office itself has passed into disrepute. In the day when, in symbolical language, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness, prophets will cease, because they are ashamed of their calling, or are frowned upon by their friends. Apparently, the professional

prophets, who plied their calling as a regular thing, even in the absence of any proper occasion to call for the exercise of the prophetic gift, succeeded, ultimately, in discrediting the prophetic office (Zech. xiii. 1-6). In this the writer confirms the view taken of the prophets in Nehemiah, in connection with their conduct over the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. vi. 14). Perhaps we ought to add, as another reason for the general disaffection towards the prophetic office, the failure to realise, in the restored community, the glorious idealisings of prophets,—the manifest contrariety between their splendid portrayals and the somewhat prosaic reality.

This mission of Ezra (458 B.C.) and the visits of Nehemiah (444 and 432 B.C., respectively) to the restored community had no bearing on the religious development. Nehemiah was busied about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem; Ezra about the regulating of temple affairs, particularly the offerings, and also in instituting certain reforms,—for the returned Jews had not hesitated pretty extensively to contract foreign marriages.

Under the new *régime*, in the restored community, as hinted, things did not seem to promise any realisation of the glorious dreams of the prophets. The rebuilding of the temple did not bring the promised Messianic age, nor did it result in either a spiritualised priesthood or people. Disappointment, not to say disillusionment, ultimately passed into religious indifference, which was evidenced in the temple offerings. For what was offered was actually the sick and defective, the generally unfit as well as the unclean. Moral laxity, as might be imagined, joined

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with religious indifference. Here the prophetic wrath flames out once more in true prophetic fashion; for the people had been divorcing their own proper wives in order to marry foreign women. The words are worth quoting:

"Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth; for I hate putting away, saith Yahweh, the God of Israel" (Mal. ii. 15-16).

Contrast this outburst, which rings true,—and which has in view, moreover, the vital requirements for the production of a godly seed,—with the identical position taken up later by Jesus, in which He does not hesitate to cut deeply into current notions and teaching, supported by the authority of never so great a name (Matt. v. 31-32; cf. Mark x. 11-12).

To the people's complaint that it was vain to serve God, Malachi replies that Yahweh has a book of remembrance for those who fear Him, and will acknowledge them as His, in that great and terrible Day to come; in advance of which, mercifully, Elijah will be sent to turn the people's hearts (Mal. iii. 14-17; iv. 5-6). In reply to the question, Where is the God of justice?—since righteous and unrighteous fare alike—the prophet maintains that Yahweh will purify the priesthood, and be a swift witness against evil-doers among the people. By a happy turn of phrase, in stating that

" . . . the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple" (Mal. iii. 1), to accomplish the purification, the prophet unconsciously uses language which a later generation will not fail to give a much more extended signification.

Malachi's interest in the temple sacrifices is not

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that of a priest but a prophet. He catches the true spirit of worship, which requires the offering of the best to the service of God; and insists that only in fulfilling these conditions, in conjunction with moral requirements, may Israel look for the blessing of God, or be preserved. Hence the genuine religious significance of the ceremonial charge:

"Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse. . . . and prove me now herewith, saith Yahweh of hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it " (Mal. iii. 10).

Thus it is apparent, from the later writings, one thing at least has resulted from the fiery ordeal of the exile. There is no longer any need on the part of prophetic men to fight prevailing tendencies to idolatry or foreign cults. Yahweh's worship, at least as regards externals, has finally struck its roots deep in the consciousness of the people. But though the victory has been gained thus far over externalism, in the age-long conflict between the spirit and the flesh, the tendency will, nevertheless, continue to persist, in a more insidious form, to face the preachers of another dispensation, to the end of time.

There remains one valuable production to be noticed, which, while in one sense it has no special prophetic teaching, being, indeed, part of the priestly narrative of the Hexateuch, may nevertheless, in its own right, challenge attention. This is the matchless account of Creation incorporated in our Genesis. Its measured style, instead of here being a defect, is well fitted for the purpose in hand, which is further aided by the poetical parallelisms of arrangement. It is

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true that, religiously, there are no new ideas developed; but, on the other hand, the universe is put solidly on a theistic basis, Being and Order and all that is deriving from God the primal Source. If this is not Inspiration it would be difficult to say what is.

In its later stages, as we have seen, Prophetism constantly repeats old thoughts, clothing them in fresh forms; but while there is elaboration of thought there is no advance in ideas. Ezekiel's work is a fine literary production, conceived in the true prophetic spirit, but adds little or nothing to our knowledge of God. There is nothing new in the religious philosophy of the Hebrew Chronicler, in his idealisings of Israel's history. The musings and moralisings of Qoheleth serve rather as a memorial of the unrest of the times in which the writer lived, and the religious understanding which he was able to come to with himself: for "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is not exactly a gospel, but a view of life looked at from the point of view of the tomb, minus any consciousness of immortality. The collected writings of the Humanists of Israel, invaluable yet in their quaint observations on human life, and direct home-thrusts, no less than for their antique literary flavor, do not, of course, touch the religious development.

The writer of Daniel writes to extol Daniel's God, for the encouragement of those living in the "time of the end"—the close of the then current age—after which the Messianic kingdom is to come (Dan. xii. 2-4, etc.). We have here a production of a time of persecution, long after the Return, in which the writer uses veiled language to disguise his meaning

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to the uninitiated. In his symbolism, which is a large element, one picture stands out clear—that of the Ancient of Days. Daniel makes much use of the current expression, Son of Man, and so helps to perpetuate the currency for other times and larger signification. There is also a developed doctrine of the Messiah, angels, resurrection, and judgment, far beyond anything elsewhere in the Old Testament.

Esther seems to have been written to explain the feast of Purim, and to exalt the Jews. Its view is purely secular, and it is the only book in the Old Testament in which there is no mention of God. It may be correct, perhaps, to regard it, with some other later writings, as an illustration of the Jewish *Haggadah*, or moralising romance.

In its final stages, Prophetism is concerned with the gathering of materials, and their combination in new forms; to which fact we owe the existing form of many of our books. Elaborating has been done here and there, lines of thought developed, gaps filled up, and attention paid to eschatological details. With the passing of Prophetism, conditions begin to obtain which carry the process of externalism to the letter of scripture, and prepare the way for the *régime* of the scribes and Pharisees.

CHAPTER XIII.

INFLUENCE OF THE LXX.

It is often overlooked that religious development continued to go on in what are sometimes regarded as post-biblical (Old Testament) times—i.e., anywhere between the reputed close of the Old Testament canon and the Christian era—and in non-biblical lands. Yet that there was such a development among the Jews of the Diaspora can be absolutely determined from the LXX. And this development is the more interesting on account of its far-reaching influence on Christianity, as well as its immediate significance.

For the Jews scattered abroad on the break-up of the Hebrew nation did not leave their religion behind, when they took up their abode among the nations of the earth. They were still worshippers of Yahweh. But their religion, and with it their religious viewpoint, needless to say, underwent a modification. They were separated from all the local surroundings which had given significance to their national history, and to the Sacred Name. Lifted bodily into a new environment, their whole perspective was changed. The demands of a new language, in addition to new scenes, made the transition complete; the more so, since the new language rooted in a past, racially and religiously, the direct antithesis to that of Israel. In

the one case the national genius expressed itself in Religion; in the other in Reason. The one interpreted the world, broadly speaking, in terms of the Heart; the other in terms of the Mind. The one was incapable of politics; the other could not live without them. Their modes of thought, as their points of view and historic development, were diverse throughout.

It would seem, therefore—the national genius of each being opposed to the other—that there could be no point of contact between Jews and Greeks. And yet the fact lies open to everyone's view that not only was a point of contact established, but what is, at first glance, much more marvellous, the non-speculative Hebrew absorbed the intellectual Greek; begetting, in the process, a new type of mind, which, in fusion, nevertheless preserved the original religious strain. Thus, as a result of Israel's downfall as a nation, we come upon the Hellenist, whose mission will be to raise up Israel anew upon foundations more enduring than any that have gone before, or that could be secured on a basis of corporate national life in a land of their own. Again the eternal is breaking away from the temporal.

There is neither priest nor prophet as of yore; or rather, the priest endures, in the Dispersion, but the prophet tends to disappear, since there is no occasion now to call him forth; the temple is gone; but the Yahweh religion does not become extinct. It continues to exist in the religious experience of pious hearts. The sacred writings that have been slowly gathering are its imperishable record. To these the pious Jew, cut off, in measure, from outer aids in the exercise of his religion—from the external symbolism

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with which it has so long been associated—clings all the more tenaciously. The voices of the prophets are again heard in the Synagogue. But a new land brings a new need. The descendants of the Jewish colonists want their sacred writings in the tongue which they can understand; the new tongue which they have learned to speak, in which they think, and which they use in their everyday life. To meet this demand, pictorial Hebrew is turned into flexible Greek.

In this work of the LXX—by no means accomplished at a sitting, but read over several generations—a development transpires which is highly instructive. The translators have to deal with Hebrew names and Hebrew incidents which are racy of the soil, and which on that account connote conceptions which cannot be carried over in translating into Greek. When they come to deal with the sacred Name, on which the whole religious history of Israel turns, which, in truth, is the key to the whole Hebrew position, they are plainly at a pass. There are two alternatives open to the translators. Knowing the difficulty of any effective translation to preserve the essential Hebraic content they may take over the word bodily, just as it stands, and incorporate it into the new tongue. This at least would preserve external continuity, and leave the word in its original Hebrew setting, which would seem to be a matter of no small importance. Or they may substitute for it some other word. They decided on the latter course. Then comes the interesting inquiry, what was the word they decided to use? At once the truth is disclosed as to the transition in their thought. For unable to use the

word Yahweh, if for no other reason than that they have outgrown the local limitations inhering in the sacred Name, they require a word which will as far as possible be colorless and comprehensive to express fitly the full idea of the divine being. This requirement they found in the Greek word *Kurios* (Lord), which is therefore uniformly substituted for the Hebrew Yahweh.

It is evident that the name of Yahweh no longer served the purpose, or answered to their religious conceptions, or they could, as stated, have transferred it bodily. Instead, *Kurios* comes to take its place in their thought. This specific fact entails a double consequence; it removes, at a stroke, the essential localism inhering in the earlier Name: and it also projects into the past the universal element, and so imparts—undesignedly, of course—to the primitive Hebrew conception their own later outlook. This simple but perfectly intelligible procedure influenced, as we shall see, the whole subsequent development, in unifying past and present conceptions of God. In this respect the LXX were exactly repeating the process of an earlier time, when the sacred writer already referred to, in writing up Israel's early history, sought to identify Yahweh with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex. vi. 2 [P]).

The reading of later ideas into earlier times thus effected—though the transition from Yahweh to Lord may be said to be registered rather than actually brought about by the LXX, having already obtained doubtless, a partial, if not a general currency—prepared the soil out of which grew up the religious ideas of the Jews previous to the coming of Christ,

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wherever the Greek tongue reached. This is a much more important moment in theistic development than the fact usually stressed,—of the providential element in the Greek tongue as a vehicle for the communication of Christian thought, in which the Hand of God is recognized,—inasmuch as the thought is greater than the vehicle. For the view of God fixed by the LXX. as regards the Old Testament, passed current among the contemporary Jews at the time of Christ—in which, of course, disciples shared with the rest—and became a powerful factor in determining conceptions both of God and of Christ. Through this channel it ultimately passed into the bibles of Christian peoples, and thus entailed one more important but unexpected consequence, in leading Christian minds to read New Testament conceptions into Old Testament times. Incidentally this accounts for the divergence between the scholar's interpretation of the Old Testament and that of the unsophisticated bible reader. It also explains the true state of the case in respect of the fears entertained in some quarters, needlessly enough, as to what are erroneously assumed to be attacks upon the Old Testament.

This transition in translation from Yahweh to Lord constitutes, then, one more moment in the genetic development of the religious idea. Instead of transferring the Hebrew word, and leaving it to carry its local and historic associations, redolent of the soil and the race of Israel, the LXX substitutes the general term which best accords with the more developed conception of God. For the Jews, God is now irrevocably determined as Universal Lord, and on this basis Hebrew scriptures can appeal to Greeks

as well as Jews, to cultivated minds of other races as well as national devotees, and to all succeeding times. In such transition the continuity of divine revelation is manifested as certainly as in any of the earlier stages, and Inspiration is seen in the choice of the word. On this account there is something to be said for the earlier version into the English vernacular, in the rendering of the Old Testament name, apart altogether from the availability or otherwise of MSS. at the time. Yahweh, historically, no doubt, is the more correct. But, devotionally, Yahweh cannot appeal to the Christian heart with the same full significance as Lord. Our earlier translators into English simply did, in substance, what the LXX had done before—read the enlarged (Christian) content into the earlier name.

It is difficult to decide which is the better rendering for use to-day, in view of the spread of general knowledge, and the accumulation of critical data. Much of the present confusion of thought in the popular mind is due, it is true, to just this substitution of Lord for Yahweh. But if the Bible, i.e., the Old Testament as well as the New, is to be requisitioned for general devotional purposes, it almost seems that we are compelled to use the word which unifies the Christian conception of God, and brings our thoughts into closest touch with Him. Take an illustration. No one can read, say, into some of the Psalms, the same rich ethical and religious content when Yahweh is put for Lord. But here a fresh difficulty arises. For in some of the Psalms, by no means few, in reading Lord in place of Yahweh, we are likely to feel a religious recoil, on account of the

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manifest contrariety of conception. We have to keep constantly before us the historic mediation, or we are likely, unconsciously, to lower the absolute ethical idea of God embodied in the word Lord, which has been brought to us by the coming of Christ, to that belonging to the cruder stages of Hebrew thought. And this is what actually is done by the unreflecting mind. Nor is this all. We shall be likely thereby to furnish a ready, and, as they will be only too likely to say, a scriptural, excuse, to those who are only too ready to conform to a standard far below that which accords with the Christian ideal.

So that, in view of all the circumstances, the rendering of the Revised Version not only seems to be historically unavoidable, but we are safest, in the devotional interest, in retaining the original Yahweh, or as it has come to be Anglicised, Jehovah. In so doing, however, now that historic interpretations of Hebrew scriptures, no longer obscured, are coming more and more into general recognition, we can afford to distinguish between local and universal, historical and devotional, in our use of the sacred Name.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INCARNATION.

THROUGHOUT this long process, occupying in its different stages a millennium and a half, Revelation has been working with materials at hand, or rather in and through them, developing in the religious consciousness of men a growing conception of God and His rule. We see the Kingdom of God taking shape before our eyes, beginning at first in temporal forms, but continually breaking free from grosser earthward tendencies. Prophetism prepares the way for the coming of Christ, and fittingly closes with the rugged prophet of the wilderness, who, standing out in stern contrast with the manners of the times, like another Elijah, suddenly appears, and proclaims a general call to repent. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! (Matt. iii. 1; cf. xi. 7, ff.).

Meanwhile a life of unique significance has been unfolding itself in normal contact with men in the normal relations of life. A life of surpassing beauty and grace, with every attribute of winsomeness and sanity in superlative degree. Steeped in the traditions of His race, nurtured on the great thoughts of the prophets, His soul grows to maturity. The dawning consciousness of adolescence, of His unique relation to God, culminates at manhood in the conviction of an imperative call to declare Himself (Luke ii. 49; iv.

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14-21). Then for the first time might be seen, for those who had eyes to see, the Face of God unveiled; as for those who had ears to hear might be heard the Voice of One speaking with all the authority of heaven. Nothing in that Life, in word or act, could be irrelevant; every slightest event is fraught with highest significance to the race. In Him the commonplaces of life become transfigured into constituents of the kingdom of heaven. In His unfolding consciousness the thought of God comes to the full. In His divine Person the whole revelation of God in time, in all its manifoldness, culminates and finds historic fulfilment.

Through all the process of revelation we have been encumbered with human and temporal limitations. These limitations do not cease with the coming of Christ. The Incarnation is a necessity if God is to come close to men. He must come to men in human form to reach men. But the human form supervenes between Him and them; for while the human reveals, it also of necessity veils, the divine. Revealed in time, the divine necessarily transcends the limitations of time and space. And so we have the ultimate basis for the expediency in Christ's departure. To be known as He is, He must lay down His life. Was there ever stranger seeming paradox? To reproduce Himself in the lives of others He must die. He, the Sinless, must perforce suffer for the sins of others. Only by submitting to death can He substantiate his claim to world supremacy (Luke xxiv. 46-47). In Him the foregleamings of all the prophets and men of God, from Moses down, touching the life and lot

of God's Anointed, find fulfilment (Luke xxiv. 27). The Son of God must needs first show Himself the Son of man—God manifest in the flesh; and the Son of man must needs die and rise again to show Himself the Son of God—God manifest in the flesh. In this way finally Revelation breaks free from the hampering entanglements of human limitations, accomplished and made complete—fulfilled—in the life and death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. v. 17, etc.).

This is the supreme truth which was seized on by the infant church. Looking past mere literalisms—all questions that had to do with the mere letter—they grasped the essential truth which lay embodied in the words of prophet and seer and applied them freely to Christ. The Gospels and Epistles—in fact, the whole of the Christian writings in the New Testament—are dominated with this one idea and worked out on this basis. The unerring guidance of Inspiration is found not in the quoting of words, which belongs to the letter, but in the seizing of truth, which belongs to the Spirit, and applying it to Christ. In this respect it was that they received enlightenment at the hands of the Master, when He opened their minds that they might understand the scriptures (Luke xxiv. 44, ff.). From this time forth the illuminating truth concerning the life and work of Christ they saw written all over the sacred pages of the past in the record of Israel's career—Israel of the Spirit, not Israel of the flesh. With this truth before him, matured by a lifetime's reflection on what he calls the gospel of the glory of the blessed God,

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the Apostle breaks into rhapsody, as he sums up the substance of his lifetime's teaching:

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness;

He who was manifest in the flesh,

Justified in the Spirit,

Seen of angels

Preached among the nations,

Believed on in the world,

Received up in glory" (I. Tim. i. 11; iii. 16).

To undiscerning eyes the world's tragedy lies hidden here. To eyes that are opened it is seen that the world's tragedy was predetermined to be the world's hope (John xviii. 37; cf. Mark xiv. 21; John xvi. 33; Heb. ix. 26; I. Pet. i. 20). There is no accident in His death, any more than in His birth, and the significance of either is nowise entrenched on by the human accompaniments (John x. 18; Luke i. 26, *et seq.*) The Suffering Servant is the Righteous King, and fills the glorious role of the Light of the World (Is. liii.; xi. 1-10; xxxii. 1-2; John viii. 12). In Him, lived under human conditions, under human limitations, as other men, the Ideal Man comes to birth, the Second Adam (I. Cor. xv. 47). We know now what man is and is intended to be. We know now that what Christ was God is forever (John xiv. 9). Well may the apostle exult in the reconciliation thus effected, in Christ, between God and man; well may he set forth Christ to the world as the One by whom we have received the reconciliation (Rom. v. 11). This is God's magnificent spelling of things, the good news of eternal life in Jesus Christ (Rom. v. 1; John iii. 16; vi. 40; x. 28; xvii. 2, 3; etc.).

God is all that Christ was, all that He could be, under limitations of time and space. His withdrawal from human eyes resulted in an enlargement of vision on the part of His followers, touching His Person, and a corresponding accession of spiritual power, connected with the coming of the Holy Ghost (Acts ii. 1, *et seq.*). Under this enlarged conception of the Person and Mission of Christ, the faltering disciples of an earthly ministry become transformed into new men, buoyant in faith, bold as lions, able to cope with the machinations of the adversary, triumphant over the world, the flesh, and the devil (Acts iv. 13, *et seq.*). A new spirit takes possession of them. The burden of their speech is Jesus (Acts viii. 35). Their effectual persuasion that though dead He liveth, and that in Him they shall live also, and shall some day see Him even as He is, constitutes forever the undying glory of the Christian hope (I. Cor. xv. 20-22; I. John iii. 2).

Tribal deity, battle hero, king and father of his people, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders" (Ex. xv. 11)—such in substance is the Old Testament conception of God, spiritualised and expanded till the God of Israel comes to be the God of heaven and earth. More and more of the meaning of the Revelation Name is seen. Righteousness and justice are the habitation of His throne; loving kindness and truth go before His face (Ps. lxxxix. 14). Yet when all is said, who cannot see the immeasurable distance between the Old Testament conception and the New? On the lips of Jesus, God is simply Father! (Luke xi. 2; cf. John v. 1, etc.). National conceptions give place to personal; official to personal; local

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to universal. The atmosphere of courts and camps is replaced by that of home (John xiv. 2). Men are given right to be sons (John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14-16). In one magnificent word God is summed up as Light and in another as Love (I. John i. 5; iv. 16; cf. John iii. 16; viii. 12, etc.). His grace is made universal (Rom. v. 18). Salvation is not from external foes, but from internal guilt, from the dread power of sin (Matt. i. 21, etc.). In express terms God is said to be Spirit, and His worshippers those who worship Him in spirit and truth (John iv. 24). Presupposed in all forms of thinking, His unity and universality appear as natural as breathing. But in that Unity mystery is involved. For Father and Son, carefully distinguished in their relations, are at the same time declared to be One; and in that Unity of fundamental Spirit a Third is associated in the Person of the promised Paraclete (John x. 30; xiv. 16; Matt. xxviii. 19; etc.).

CHAPTER XV.

REVELATION OUTSIDE ISRAEL.

THE question arises, In His revelation of Himself, was God shut up to the one line of development through Hebrew seers? This may constitute the Jewish view, but assuredly not the Christian. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, in his remarkable preamble, introduces us to a revelation so varied in its manifestation that it might well go outside Israel for expression, though such an idea, apparently, was far from the writer's thought. Hebrew seers came to be such not by accident of birth—though, doubtless, inheriting all natural and necessary psychic qualifications—but through the actual process of revelation (II. Pet. i. 21; cf. John i. 13; iii. 6). Peter is brought to a higher standpoint, in part, by his interview with Cornelius (Acts x. 28-35). Paul maintains that the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God, which is true; but unconsciously grants a possible basis outside Judaism in his famous passage as to the Gentiles showing the work of the law written in their hearts (Rom. ii. 14-15; cf. iii. 2). He is careful to distinguish between the Israel of the flesh and Israel of the Spirit, and is bold enough to declare that circumcision is nothing (Rom. ix. 6; I. Cor. vii. 19). The Master, be it remembered, found faith outside Israel, and extraordinary faith; and on one occasion,

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at least, exasperated Jewish hearers by reminding them that the pious should come from the four quarters of earth and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, while the children of the kingdom should be left out (Matt. xv. 28; Luke vii. 9; xiii. 28-30). This is consonant with the position taken by John in dealing with the Pharisees, that religious place and privilege do not depend on natural descent (Matt. iii. 9).

These and other considerations serve to supply a possible basis in Christian thought for the assumption that God might go outside Israel in making Himself known. Such, in fact, is a fundamental necessity in the nature of God, whose revelation of Himself must needs be as comprehensive as the universe. This is specifically involved in Paul's attitude on various occasions, notably in his famous address at Athens, and in his expostulations with the excited people at Lystra. "God did not leave Himself without witness" (Acts xvii. 22-31; xiv. 17; cf. Rom. ii. 15).

Coming into the riches of the gospel, born under conditions which have been brought about by its influence, we are in a position to take a survey of things, pre-Christian and post-Christian, such as was not possible to those of apostolic times. There is assuredly no heresy in recognising that God spake in Confucius, in Gautama, in Mohammed—in anyone soever who has voiced in any degree the truth of the divine. A flickering rushlight, be it remembered, is of the same nature with sunlight, and derives from the same source. Whatever of light and truth their message holds comes from God, the Father of lights, the Giver of every good and perfect gift (Jas. i. 17). This is

simply ascribing the glory to God, attributing to Him all that is good in the world, mixed though it be in man with mortal imperfections and mortal sin. Everyone that doeth righteousness, saith John, is begotten of Him; also everyone that loveth (I. John. ii. 29; iii. 7). Everyone that is of the truth, said Jesus, in His great confession before Pilate, heareth my voice (John xviii. 37). This witness is true. It found living illustration in the deputation of Greeks, in the day when Jesus was able to say the hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified. They were the first of the representatives of the nations of earth who, in response to the inner light, should ultimately come to His feet (John xii. 21; cf. i. 9). The writer of Hebrews points out that the king of Salem received recognition from Abraham, the father of the faithful, though the fact was evidently a staggering piece of evidence (Heb. vii. 4). We are slow to apprehend the world-embracing truth which came to Peter, that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him (Acts x. 34-35).

Our Christian ideas, in view of their historical mediation, of necessity have a Jewish tinge; but be it ever borne in mind that the Jewish is temporal, and the Christian universal. There is and has been only one God and Father, who is over all, and through all, and in all (Eph. iv. 6). We are precluded by John's gospel from assuming that God loved but one small section of a world (John iii. 16). Israel was undoubtedly the chosen race, par excellence, whose was the adoption, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose were the fathers, and of

whom as concerning the flesh is Christ, who is over all, God blessed forever (Rom. iii. 2; ix. 4-5). To such honor they were designated from the beginning, by virtue of their national genius, and the course of their national history. For their election to this high service was mediated in absolute accord with the national genius, through the national consciousness, as well as through the religious consciousness of Israel's great men; although the mass of Israel were no more ideal worshippers on that account than the mass of other races, however much in advance of others, religiously, Israel might be.

It will not, therefore, be thought out of place to say that God's revelation was also in measure mediated through the national genius of other races, of all races, since time began. God is made known in the national genius of Greece for Form and Intellect, in expressing the ultimate truth of things, despite the fact that the mass of the Greeks were low, earthborn creatures, and that her great men were contemptuous toward the crowd. No unbiased mind will class Socrates or Plato with the first or second Isaiah, in the matter of direct vision; but equally no one will fail to see in their writings something of the divine, struggling with more or less clearness into evidence. Plato's prevision of the fate of the perfect man indicates the essential oneness of revelation; and Socrates is sometimes spoken of as a Christian before Christ. Despite human distortions and accretions, we may see God's revelation mediated in and through their life and works. God is revealed in Rome's genius for Law and Order; in the Teuton's individuality of temperament and practical genius for getting things done; in the

Celt's noble enthusiasm for lost causes. God fulfils Himself in many ways.

We are thus justified in taking a comprehensive view of God's revelation of Himself to the race. In primitive man, and every man, He reveals Himself through the necessary implications of human consciousness. At some stage in the complex process of world development the idea of good emerges, the idea of God. Dim and fitful at first, finding expression in natural phenomena, in trees and stones, the idea once come to consciousness is a fixed possession of the race. With it moral consciousness comes to birth. Their co-development in a world-long process till they coalesce is a movement of such magnitude and importance, we submit, as to be worthy of a God, infinite in perfections, such as we believe in. The necessary subsidiary processes are all in His keeping and guiding, taking shape at His will, predetermined in scope from the beginning (Acts xvii. 26; cf. Rom. ix. 16; Jer. xviii. 1, *et seq.*). The habitat of man plays an important part in the bringing about of this end. Racial characteristics are no chance combination, but subserve divine ends. The goal gives significance to the intervening stages. It is to be feared that we have taken too superficial a view of God's power and prowess, and have in thought, at least, limited the Holy One of Israel.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GROWING CONCEPTION OF GOD.

EVERY stage in human thought is a fresh call to revise and recast our views. It is impossible to continue indefinitely to think in the terms of a bygone time, inasmuch as our knowledge is constantly increasing, and our conceptions undergoing corresponding change. In saying this we are simply recognising God's method of progression, and following in the wake of the prophets of old. Geology, biology, psychology, as formerly astronomy, all bid us hold with loose grasp preconceived ideas. We must keep an open mind. Unreasoned fears are as evidently incompetent to change things as they are manifestly absurd. Indulging them, we but reflect on the power and wisdom of the glorious Being whose handiwork we set out to explore. The whole circle of the sciences simply serves to set forth on a world-scale the wonder-working Power and Wisdom of God. The place they are designed to fill is a very real part of the process of revelation. In their light we are enabled to see that God has wrought His Being into the very nature of things, and that in and through all that is God is continually making Himself known. This is precisely Paul's thought in the opening chapter of his master treatise dealing with the great fundamental questions of the Christian Faith (Rom. i. 19-20).

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In the same way studies in various fields lead us to see that, equally with the Messianic foregleams of prophets, every aspiration in the sons of men, in the present and the past, comes to fulfilment in Christ. Our conception of God is enriched by the course of Christian history. We see God at work carrying out His purpose under ever new conditions, and are able to enter more and more into the meaning of things, and to become in increasing measure fellow-workers with Him (II. Cor. vi. 1). Nevertheless, push our inquiries as we may, we cannot escape mystery; for knowledge merely conditions revelation, while it makes possible more. If we regard the whole created universe as the sum total of God's thoughts concerning Himself, revealed in time, it is obvious that only as we gain universal knowledge can we know all of God that may be known. This requires us to posit a consummation in some future time, when we shall know even as we are known (I. Cor. xiii. 12).

For present purposes it concerns us only to recognise, and to emphasise, the fact that the full knowledge of God is not a fixed but a growing content. Not races of men only, but the various orders of being—everything, animate and inanimate, in its measure, holds of God (Rom. i. 20). This, indeed, is the leading thought in the first chapter of Genesis. There is something of God in the dewdrop and sunbeam, as in all the stately succession of forms of life. The highest revelation in this regard is reached in man, who in his godlike capacities of mind and heart is most like God. When the Second Adam emerges before the gaze of men He comes displaying in His own glorious Person all the possibilities of the first, in perfection; and

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more—comes bodying forth God; so that He is said to be the image of the invisible God, the effulgence of His glory, despite the limitations conditioned by His Jewish environment (Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3). The expanding revelation continues right on into the Christian Church, according to the express promise of Christ, who made the astounding statement that His survivors should do greater works than Himself, and also, taught by the Spirit, should be guided into all the truth (John xiv. 12; xvi. 13; cf. vii. 39; Acts ii. 4, 33).

We are thus in order in recognising a growing conception of God in the Christian era, as well as that which went before. All that Christ actually was, and all that He stood for, was not and could not be perceived by His disciples all at once; nor after centuries is it yet perceived. This awaits the consummation when we shall see and know Him as He is. Meanwhile He is for us the growing Christ just as truly as He is the ageless, changeless Christ, both aspects of truth being included in the eternal Christ (John i. 1; Heb. xiii. 8; cf. I. John iii. 2; I. Cor. xiii. 9-12). The Master has many things to say which His disciples are still not able at any one time to take up into their thought (John xvi. 12). The proper Christological interpretation of scripture is for us, as for His earlier followers, a vital matter in the development of Christian thought. It is as needful for us as for them that Christ should open our mind to understand—make known to us the things concerning Himself—in the light of conditions of to-day. By this means many stumbling-blocks will be moved out of the way, and much misdirected effort spared. For us, as for them,

there are further revelations in store, fresh visions of Jesus, as we gain in our own experience what we have seen portrayed in scripture, a growing apprehension of the fulness of God, exemplifying in the individual experience the law of development for the race (I. Thess. v. 23; Rom. viii. 18-23; cf. Eph. iii. 19; iv. 13).

In this way, under the spiritual illumination common to the Christian mind, we seek in our inquiries to distinguish between temporal and eternal, accidental and universal, in the modes of God's manifestations to the individual and the race. Human and divine, as we have repeatedly seen, commingle at every stage. We cannot know the one without the other, but we can learn to distinguish between the two. Discernment of this law in the outworking of God's revelation will help to save us from bad blunders in handling Hebrew and Christian writings, and from the humiliating experience of taking impossible positions. Revelation and reason can never be at variance (John i. 1). Consciousness throughout all its stages is one. Truth is one and the same for all consciousness, human and divine. Fear raised by scripture inerrancies finds no place when the human element is seen and known. Revelation is not in the letter, but in the spirit; the letter, mechanically rendered, killeth, but the Spirit giveth life (II. Cor. iii. 6; John vi. 63).

It is well that we pay attention to this vital distinction, which is not always recognised. The letter serves an important function as the vehicle of communication, but the heart and substance of revelation is eternal truth, which is not subject to the mutabilities

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of mortal limitations. In other words, the record is distinct from the revelation, the human words through which the living Word of God came from the Living Word itself, the Everlasting Truth. Every individual is free, and must be, to utter God's message in his own terms; and in each case it will be found that the human enters with the divine into the man's conceptions, as well as into their embodiment into words. This gives ample play for each man's individuality. He must make choice of what materials he has, in the data required, whether complete or incomplete, or even incorrect. Inspiration has no concern with the completeness or otherwise of genealogies, or the correctness of chronological arrangement. This is made clear by a comparison of Matthew and Luke. Matthew groups his materials in his own way, regardless of strict chronological sequence. Luke must hunt up his sources to write his account (Luke i. 1). There is no such thing as drawing on the inner consciousness for facts. Luke shows himself, throughout, the careful historian; but any inaccuracy in detail will not stultify the general truthfulness; nor will variations in the accounts of eye-witnesses invalidate their testimony. These belong to mortal imperfection. The gospels are no less authentic portraits of the changeless Christ because they vary in details; nor do they one whit less attest the truth of Inspiration because of the human element.

So with the other sacred writers. The truth of their message is as far removed from any question of inerrancy in historical detail as is the truth of poetry from any inaccuracies in historical setting. God's revelation is not concerned, and could not be concerned, with these things, except incidentally; but has

to do with the outworking of moral and spiritual forces in life. It has to do with a given course of action in given circumstances; with the attitude to be taken which chimes in with the eternal. It displays unerring prevision with regard to some coming event, and its significance, and in general exhibits unfailing insight into the true inwardness of things. In every case it is the eternal factor in the situation which is seized, some interpretation of the will of God, some unfolding of the divine mind (Is. x. 5, *et seq.*; Jer. xxv. 9-11; cf. Jer. xxvii. 12; Is. xxxvii. 6-7; xxxii. 17, etc.). Parable may serve (II. Sam. xii.), or poetry (Job), or narrative (gospels), or whatever literary form may suit the subject in hand; but through it all runs the divine element. Revelation is not in the literary form, but in the truth it contains; and different men might express the same truth in different ways. It is not their own thought they are uttering, but the thought of God. The apostle was careful to make this distinction when giving judgment on matters on which he could claim no special command, and our Lord's words are to the same effect (I. Cor. vii. 6, *et seq.*; John xii. 49; xiv. 24; I. Kings xix. 12).

The distinction between the Living Truth and its human mediation is not confined to prophet or apostle, but is of application to-day in the ministry of the Word. "Preach the Word" most emphatically does not mean any mere set of words or mechanical repetition of texts (II. Tim. iv. 2). The bible was never drawn up with the idea of its being a text-book. It means the truth demanded by the occasion. Every preacher with a heaven-sent message knows how to distinguish between the human and divine in his utterance, between the truth which he has to give and

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the language in which he clothes it; he knows precisely what part of his message belongs to God and what to himself, and does not confound the one with the other. The mere words count for little; it is the extent to which they body forth the Eternal Truth that is important. Not the words, but the thought contained therein, so far as it accords with the divine, and, still more, the spirit in which it is expressed, are the eternal element, the Living Word, with which Jesus identifies Himself, as He does with the Living Bread (John xvii. 17; cf. i. 1; vi. 51; etc.).

In our use of these splendid turns of speech we must beware of running into literalisms. For what, after all, are words? Signs of ideas! The mere sounds presented to the ear or shapes to the eye, are meaningless in themselves except as we put meaning into them. In every case, in speaking of words, we have in mind not the literal character, but the mental content. It is this mental content which is of significance for spirit, and with which we are concerned in revelation. All this, of course, is the most elementary of truths in psychology, but it is well once for all to have it understood in connection with the mediation of revelation. All unsuspectingly the old issues of Nominalism and Realism have been again raised in unexpected quarters, and there are those who seem to think, and who positively teach, that words have a saving virtue in themselves. It is, no doubt, true, that we cannot separate the thought from the words; but it is manifestly incumbent on us that we do not confuse them, word with thought, name with thing, record with revelation, transitory form with everlasting truth. The Word of God abideth forever (II. Cor. iv. 7; cf. II. Tim. iii 16; II. Pet. i. 20-21; I. Pet. i. 23).

CHAPTER XVII.

GENERAL SURVEY.

THE conception of God which brings under one view the vast range of all the manifestations of God in time is as valid as it is sublime. On this footing every additional item of truth that man can gain is but an additional evidence which serves to illuminate the march of God. We need not stumble at man's natural tendency to localise God. This is the child's way, comes easiest, and is unavoidable. The greatest of minds are compelled to picture God under various thought-forms: and in advanced age, in great and common minds alike, the child's way still survives. We are not surprised that primitive man sought to set forth the Unseen by a visible form. The stern Hebrew, gaining a better glimpse of the great reality, forbade the picturing of God; but the prohibition only serves to show the strength of the tendency. We still use symbols under the ægis of the Christian name. Roman Catholic has his pictures and images; Greek Catholic his icons; nor are Protestants averse to avail themselves of the masterpieces of imagination to feed the flame of their devotion. Thus the coming of Christ is seen to meet the universal need felt for objectifying God.

Nevertheless, the localising of God, in the person of Christ, though needful for mortal minds, labors un-

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the defects of its qualities. Men could see and handle, and rejoice, in telling after generations so (I. John i.). But to the extent that they could see and handle they failed in both. The Infinite cannot be compressed into the finite, though the finite can express a measure of the Infinite, and suggest more. We may well conceive that Christ's bodily presence was both a help and a hindrance to higher faith. Remember Paul's words about knowing Christ after the flesh (II. Cor. v. 16), as well as the Master's intimation as to the expediency of His going. His jubilant cry over Peter's immortal confession registers at the same time the earliest apprehension of a human soul as to the higher truth concerning Himself. True, it was but a partial glimmer of the glorious truth which broke on Peter's mind, but it was a moment of revelation, a genuine outbreking of spiritual vision and triumph of faith over delusive form. For the frail figure beside him was now seen to be somewhat more than man. Peter's spiritual awakening dates the beginning of the Christian era, and may be put alongside the awakening of Moses at the burning bush, and Abraham's recognition of the voice of God within (Matt. xvi. 17; cf. Ex. iii.; Gen. xii.).

God is in things, but we must distinguish between God and things. Man puts his personality into his creations in varying degree. We are not thereby compelled to confound man and work. His personality abides in his work to the extent that he has succeeded in putting himself into it. It is a poor illustration, but may help us to understand how God's personality abides in His work. This, however, is but the child's way of looking at things. We may

take higher ground and regard the universal cosmos as but the experience of God, constituted and held together by the divine consciousness in the same way as the partial cosmos of individual experience is constituted and held together by human consciousness. Reverting to child forms of thought, we may say that God is present in the cosmos in a sense in which it is impossible for man to be. And this brings us to the apprehension of further truth. God transcendent is the child stage in the conception of God. The child's view is true, but it is not the whole truth. God is Spirit—this and nothing else can be the truth (John iv. 24). It is both less and more difficult to present God to our thought as Spirit than under some more tangible figure. By this means we escape temporal limitations, but in escaping are at once in a *terra incognita*. Thus much we know: God immanent is necessary truth. Once this idea is fully developed in the mind we are in a position to enter understandingly into the apostle's superb conception: "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28).

Admit this, and unworthy views of the world and its destiny disappear. God is in the world. God is in nature. Nature, red in tooth and claw, stumbles us; yet nature is undeniably a partial revelation of God, could we but spell it out! The revelation is writ large in the ascending scale of being, conditioned, as the ascent is, to human observation, on suffering, beyond our finite intelligence wholly to grasp. Here we come upon the Inscrutable. As in nature, so in history, God is in the movements of men. Human and divine, as we have seen, are commingled; but on that very account there is hope in every human movement, as

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there is hope in every phase and stage of universal nature. The sense of justice, deep seated in the human breast, which, like Abel's blood, cries out to God, betrays its heavenly origin. It may body itself forth, on occasion, in avenging forms; sophistries of generations and smooth prophesyings will then get short shrift. Not difficult to distinguish here between the divine and human, the cry and the revenge! In this way we may extract the divine impulse at the heart of a movement like the French Revolution, as well as that of the 18th century revival of Religion. We may discern God at work in the last French struggle with Rome, and other ecclesiastical crises, as in the wars of Israel. The same potent influence may be seen amid the conflicting forces in Russia, as in the varied movements which go to indicate a national rebirth in China. Everywhere it is the same divine "Power which makes for righteousness, not ourselves," active in legislation for human betterment, effective in philanthropy, operative in every movement for good, bringing us stage by stage, as we are able, on our way to the ultimate goal. Its beneficent leading is seen in the international gatherings at The Hague, which, if nothing else, have at least effected a broadening and softening in the views of men.

All this upward development, let us pause to repeat, is at the price of blood. Blood is everywhere, even on the garments of the Son of God, and is part of the problem wrapped in deepest mystery. The shadow of evil lies full athwart the path of the history of man. But this we know and understand—blood is shed for human redemption, for human light and lib-

erty, and the sacredness of the object, as an altar of sacrifice, sanctifies the gift and justifies the cost.

So, like the apostle, recognising that the power is of God and not from ourselves, when perplexed we are not in despair, but take fresh heart of hope (II. Cor. iv. 7-8.). We are not staggered when amid the confused utterances of earth we catch the dreadful cry of blood. It will prove to be a hard saying to uncircumcised ears, but the general social unrest holds of heaven! At bottom, the dissatisfaction with things as they are is also a more or less blind outreaching after things as they ought to be, a prophecy, if rightly directed, of better things to come. Disregard the cry, stifle it, and it will break forth afresh in uncontrollable fury, a destroying angel, a veritable incarnation of vengeance threatening doom to the existing order. Heed the cry, right the wrongs, and the threatening portent passes into the promise of a Golden Age. For this human cry is at bottom a rough way of calling on the nations to repent; its burden is the old-time social message of prophetism; its great exponent the Prophet of Nazareth; and its goal the Kingdom of God.

Who can walk with measured step and even gait down the centuries, tracing the Path of God! Who, gazing upon this vast universe, and all its manifestations of the divine, thinking the thoughts of God after Him, can help bowing himself in presence of the Awful Majesty! The conception which regards God as an absentee in His universe is atheism. God is everywhere present and everywhere active, in all the processes of nature and all the movements of men. From amœba to man God reveals Himself in one un-

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broken revelation. Accepting man as the last stage, or the latest, we read in man's nature the evident signs of God. What else lies within the shadow we know not, but this is clear—the being who finds within himself a sense of helpful sympathy, a consciousness of obligation to pursue a moral end, derives from a Source that is not less but greater than himself. In this way we seek to spell out man's ultimate origin, delighted to find ourselves in accord with the seers of old. Man's nature carries with it, or rather in it, irrefragable proofs of the existence of God. With this before us, there are no more haunting terrors to faith, as to the Ultimate Reality. Fresh discoveries serve not to shake but to stimulate faith. The complete circle of human knowledge fulfils its destined end in reinforcing the basal presuppositions, as we go from man to find God.

It is in the nature of things that this general implication of God should be found to express itself in a myriad ways in the human quest after the Infinite—now more or less hesitating, feeling its way (Acts xvii. 27); now more or less confident and assured. The implication of God comes to full expression in the Christian consciousness. We do not thereby decide that the whole non-Christian world is hopelessly heathen and morally destitute. Destitute, alas, countless numbers among them are, as among us; but among them, as among us, may be found those who in varying degree hold by the Unseen, else had there been no idea of God, and no revelation. They at least feel after God, to use Paul's pregnant phrase. Their light, equally with ours, derives from God, and their yearnings, equally with ours, find fulfilment in Christ.

Steeped in this truth, we may go undismayed to the nations and proclaim a message which can be received by all—highly developed, undeveloped, under-developed, civilized and savage, cultured and barbarian, bond and free. For there is revelation in the lisp of a child. The responsive mother love holds of God. Throughout the entire sentient creation, in ascending and descending scale, runs this deep mother love, blind or conscious—in bird and beast, in savage and civilised man; for it is from the One Father that all parenthood, whether in heaven or earth, is named (Eph. iii. 15). It is the One God who is worshipped, whether ignorantly or understandingly, by ancients and moderns, under varying forms; who through the varying discipline of life is ever working to bring men to a knowledge of Himself (I. Tim. ii. 4; cf. Rom. i. 28; Luke xv. 11, *et seq.*). Revelation reaches its goal in the experience of man, subjectively considered, when he is brought to a realisation of Sonship with God (John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14; cf. I. John iii. 1, 2).

Looking back for a moment, it will be seen that there are no breaks, and can be none, in God's Revelation of Himself to the race, and in man's progression, under this revelation, towards the Light. That is, God does not work by cataclysms, but by continuity. Life never pauses. Life derives from Life. *E nihilo nihil fit*. There is no spiritual life but derives from spiritual life. The continuity of the spiritual is as unbroken as that of the physical, if it be not more correct to say that the two are one. There is a law of spiritual descent, as well as natural, and these two are one. So it goes—life from life, in unbroken continuity.

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Life never pauses. Limitations of thought require us to think and speak in static terms, or under static forms. But life knows no such. Revelation knows no such. There is one grand progressive continuity from the beginning to the end—if we stretch that beginning back before the foundation of the world, and project the end beyond the final consummation. Revelation, like life, is self-expression, and God must needs express Himself to live.

PART II.

**PRESENT DAY CONDITIONS AND THE
KINGDOM OF GOD**

CHAPTER I.

PREFATORY.

THERE is no ignoring the fact that many questions, practical and theoretical, of peculiar and pressing importance, are agitating the minds of men to-day, in increasing numbers, probably as never before; and that the signs all point to a continuance, rather than a cessation, of such agitation. Social conditions in the world at large, and the unprecedented advance in human knowledge in the last century, have combined to force these questions to the front.

In themselves such questions cannot be regarded as a sign of decadence, and it is but a counsel of despair which would argue that they are necessarily ill-omened. They are capable of far other interpretation, namely, as evidence, rather, of a growing consciousness of a growing ideal, an enlarged and enlarging vision of a fuller manhood and a more splendid life. They betoken an increasing mental alertness on the part of increasing numbers of men. If this be so, it is all to the gain, from the point of view both of human good, and the higher good. In a very true sense it might be maintained that the various movements to which such questions have given rise are, in their real inwardness, but the outworking of the Spirit of God in the affairs of men.

It is incumbent on the Church not only to face

the situation manfully, but to see to it that she accepts her God-given right and duty, and takes her place, as guide and director of all human movements for human betterment. So will she be able to vindicate her claim to be the divinely accredited exponent of the things of God. So will she fulfil the two-fold function handed down by the prophets of old, and rightly interpret her Master to the sons of men, who fed the hungry, healed the sick, comforted the wretched, restored the fallen, and brought salvation to both the bodies and minds of men.

On the intellectual side, we need not unduly deplore the fires of criticism through which we have passed, and are still passing, and which, indeed, serve a beneficent purpose. For one thing, we are simply making up for the hasty generalisations of other times. Nothing but the most painstaking process of inquiry, in the most thoroughgoing fashion, will avail, if things are to be settled, and to stay settled. We cannot, perhaps, in justice blame the actors in the reformation, since each age has its own more pressing problems, and they had other work to do. It is but human if glaring defects appear in the results of their herculean labors, as Wesley was free to admit. The personal equation counts here as elsewhere. There is a further, and much more valid, reason why they should not be expected to anticipate modern needs. The materials were not available. The modern period was but just begun. If, when papal authority was discarded, some other authority, *ab extra*, was felt to be needed; and if, in the circumstances, the freer approach to scripture yielded to a literalistic rigidity, we cannot complain. But we are not, therefore, com-

pelled to posit infallibility as regards either the heroes or the findings of the reformation. That would be but one degree better—or worse—than to do so as regards the occupant of the papal chair.

It remains, therefore, to acknowledge that the present unsettledness is but a legacy, in part, of the unsettled past. Slowly, but surely, the process of inquiry is being pushed to final results; slowly, but surely, materials are accumulating for the restatement of the Christian faith. The process cannot be hurried, and cannot be stayed. Meanwhile, we do not need to live in vacuo. The human heart is still amenable to appeal, whatever form our message takes. The moral imperative is written indelibly within. The evangel of Jesus never grows old.

CHAPTER II.

SOCIAL UNREST.

Is the hope of a Golden Age, some time to come, continually returning to the heart of man, a vain dream? Are we cherishing a chimera? Have we toiled and suffered in vain? Are we deceived?

One can scarcely imagine any more practical questions that could engage the minds of men. Man thinks he was not born to die, and he thinks many other things. Have his deeper instincts led him astray? Is the existing and age-long unrest—social, intellectual, religious—all unavailing, labor lost? Can it be that men are doomed to be the sport of Chance, the plaything of contending forces, mere driftwood toyed with by the tossing waves? Or is this planet moving on in stately majesty through sure stages to its ultimate goal, in the Will of God?

Our Lord's words put into the mouth of His wistful disciples, come with refreshing reassurance: "Thy kingdom come!" "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth!" They will bear much more looking into, much more emphasis, than is usually given to them. They stand out in characters of light against the dark and dreary background of the world's history—a continual vision of something better than has yet been, a glimpse of glory to beckon us on, a promise, if not a prophecy, backed by the signature of deity, of a transformed earth!

The question which we have to face is, How shall we interpret present-day conditions, and retain our faith undimmed? What do our Lord's words mean?

They mean this, at least—God's will, so far as human actions are concerned, is only too frequently not done on earth! The world is not as it ought to be! But they mean also that God's will is intended to be done, and to be done in the ordinary course among mortals on this globe. The Lord's Prayer is no idle utterance. Either this, or we shall be compelled to convict the Master of solemn trifling. God's will is unquestionably meant to be carried out in the affairs of this world. His will is that earth should be made like heaven. Which means among other things, that Society is to be transformed to its very core, informed throughout with a new spirit, and, in consequence, reorganised, reconstructed from the bottom to the top.

Our social unrest may well be, in the eyes of some, a dire portent! There is a lurid side to social troubles. There have been social explosions in history before, and there may be again. Social unrest unheeded, unallayed, spells doom! Let those who incline to speak jauntingly, or think superficially, of the social situation, take warning betimes!

There is, however, a further interpretation, which those who are rightly instructed will be able to read. Social unrest, at bottom, is discontent with things as they are; and this is a more or less direct intimation of things as they ought to be. In this way social unrest becomes a prophecy, an augury of hope. It is quite in the order of things. It fulfils a beneficent function. It is a sign of pain in the body politic, an-

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swering to the sign of pain in the human body, and serving a like end. Pain is the concomitant of sensitivity, by the will of God; an inevitable and inexorable outcome of feeling, under given conditions; and, like all the divine economy, fulfils different ends. It is a divine safeguard against unthinking running into risks, and a signal that something is wrong. Put your hand in the fire—you draw it back instinctively! It burns! If it were not for the function fulfilled by pain, if it did not hurt, you would any time be liable to lose your hand, fire being fire and flesh being flesh.

If you stand in front of a locomotive going sixty miles an hour—what then? Is that the will of God? The suggestion makes us recoil. Yet how can the sequence be avoided, if the law of gravitation holds? If the law of gravitation is not to be constant, the world cannot exist, nor we on it. Everything would be flying in all directions—a crash, a wreck, not of one individual, but of worlds. The law of gravitation is one mode of the operation of the will of God, and by that beneficent will is constant.

When the boiling water scalds my hand, is that His will? When a child is maimed for life by a runaway horse, or a man is mangled beyond recognition by a falling bridge, or a falling tree, how then?

Let us stop a moment to try and straighten this out. Existence as a whole is like a web, holding all things together, and we are part of the whole. We cannot be in existence, part of it, and out of it, at the same time. The fact of our existence at all entails enormous risks, in view both of our imperfect knowledge, and of our dependence one on another, each on all, and all on

each. In the development of a world order, worthy in its scope of God, and worthy of man, it would seem that these risks are inseparable from the world process—the inevitable concomitant of human limitations on the one hand and human possibilities on the other. There might, perchance, be a race of manikins, without such fearful risks, but scarcely of men. The human mind fails to see how, in the light of all the knowledge available, given man's make-up and sensitivity, such risks could be ruled out. God has doubtless weighed this all up, in His own mind, and has deliberately made man. That is His answer to the question, To be, or not to be! It is God's will that man should grow up in the conditions, out of the conditions, in which he finds himself.

Nor is this a one-sided, arbitrary arrangement, against which men are compelled to rebel. For, notwithstanding the risks, it may be taken for certain, so far as the individual is concerned, few could be found who would be willing to cast their vote on the other side. Taking things at the worst, it is not in human nature to prefer extinction to life. Thus, at one point at least, it may be said that God and man are at one—as regards the intrinsic value of life. It is worth while to live!

But that every man, by deliberate design of God, should suffer in all respects as he does suffer—such an idea is abhorrent! God has no such thought. It is alien from His mind. It would make of God a monster. If a man puts his hand in the fire, intentionally or otherwise, it will assuredly be burned, and, looking to the action of natural forces, this will just as assuredly be the outworking of God's will. If he goes and

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stands in front of a moving engine, though it may seem a hard saying, it is God's will—again looking to the action of natural forces in the natural course—that he be crushed. The man's standing there, however, is no part of the will of God. His standing there and being crushed is, in fact, directly opposed to the will of God. Thus we arrive at a flat contradiction. In one breath we say that it is, and it is not, the will of God. It is God's will that we should suffer, under given conditions, inasmuch as, under those conditions, nothing else is possible; but it is not necessarily His will that we should be or should remain in those conditions. In reality there is no more contradiction than in the case of any father's child getting into trouble, doing something against the father's will. The father certainly does not wish his child to get into trouble; but, doing as he does, it may well be that the child's trouble carries with it the father's approval—is, in fact, under the circumstances, the father's will. How much rather, however, would he have saved his child the sorrow, had that been possible! That, in fact, is normally and constantly the father's heart desire—the father's will! Do not the words readily recur, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"?

Is it God's will that man should be crushed under conditions that he cannot individually control? A thousand times, No! This would make earth a hell, instead of heaven. It is not God's will that men should suffer, given right conditions. Given wrong conditions, suffering is unavoidable. The innocent

suffer with the guilty, for in the web of life the conditions once created affect all.

It is not God's will if a little child is hurt by a runaway horse—His displeasure, rather, is kindled against the carelessness that left the horse to run away. It is not His will that accidents occur—it is against His will. It is His will that the occasions for accidents be obviated. Defective steel rails are not His will. An open cage is not His will. Fever-laden atmosphere, filthy stockyards, reeking sewers, villainous slums, are not His will. His will is that wholesome conditions should obtain and prevail everywhere, for the general good—the general health, and life, and happiness.

It is not God's will that anything detrimental to child or man should have place in the world. God's anger is kindled against the carelessness, or heartlessness, that neglects precautions, scamps work, or in any wise entails damage to a single member of the race. His will is that men should grow up in full possession of all their powers of body and mind; and that those powers should be retained unimpaired, and transmitted in all their vigor to posterity. It is His will that full manhood should have play, uncramped by evil surroundings, unsapped by evil habit; that men should be sober, alert, sure of foot, steady of hand, keen of eye, clear of brain, mindful of one another's welfare, watchful over one another's lives. It is His will that man's genius should be free to invent and apply all manner of life-saving and labor-saving devices for the general good; that men should work for, and not against, the common good; and that, in short,

they should use all their powers and appliances for the furtherance of the general good.

While on this subject it may be well for us to pause a moment more. God's will is not left nugatory; it is enforced by pains and penalties sufficiently obvious, as we see in life. If a sinner dies a horrible death, in his sins, it cannot but be regarded as, in the circumstances, the will of God. There is an awful world of truth in this double aspect of the will of God. The Gospel ministrations are not in vain said to be a savour from death unto death, as well as a savour from life unto life. It is pathetically and eternally true of the Divine Ruler that He would rather that any sinner should turn, and live, than that his life should go out in miserable despair. But the Stone cut without hands, which breaks a man in pieces, breaks him all up in contrition, if he fall on it; shall, if it fall on him, impenitent, grind him to powder and scatter him as dust.

Social unrest, then, is like pain in the human body. It is a sign of danger, a signal that something is wrong which ought to be put right. It fulfils a vital function in the body politic by calling attention to vital issues, and serves a beneficent end in letting us know conditions betimes. This is assuredly a divine purpose—the will of God wrought, so to speak, into the very constitution of things, and worked out in life.

At bottom, social unrest is a cry for justice, for a more equitable share in the goods of life. The glaring inequalities that obtain in the world are no part of the economy of God. If this be questioned, go to the Scriptures! What means the far-away cry of Micah and Isaiah, and the social message of Jesus and the

prophets? What mean these words of the apostle John—"Whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" How, indeed! What of the disclaimer of the apostle Paul—that he did not mean that some should be eased and others burdened; but, contrariwise, by equality, that abundance should supply want? Equalizing of burdens—that was the doctrine! This is a workable religion! It restores a man's faith in God! What else is possible to Love? Away with our sophistries! These glaring inequalities have no place in the Kingdom of God!

One of the hopeful tendencies of the times is the growing recognition of this truth. Jesus is coming to his Own! Social conditions are being studied more and more, with a view to social amelioration. The noble words of Bishop Gore, voicing the feelings of earnest men in his communion, and other earnest utterances, are cheering indications of a new drift in human affairs. The English Methodist Union for Social Service, and other social agencies, on both sides of the ocean, are of an importance quite beyond their present limited range. It is the day of small things, perchance, but the small things indicate the lines of a world development. Governments are giving increasing attention to social questions—and have to! It is precarious to speak too positively, but a large part of the more crying evils of society, let us hope, are in a fair way of being faced with a view to their being ultimately removed.

Improved conditions are part and parcel of the common good. It is certainly more like heaven that

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people should grow up in the best of surroundings. That is what God has given us this world for. The welfare of society, as well as the individual, is an integral part of the programme of the Kingdom of God. If this has not exactly been overlooked, in time past, it has most assuredly not had the emphasis it should. Nor has it yet.

But the cure for human ills must go deeper still. Improved conditions alone will not bring in the millennium. The cure for the ills of mankind is not reached merely in allaying social unrest. Could this be actually achieved, the trouble might very conceivably break out all afresh. The root of the difficulty is sin in the heart. Everything could be, and would be, as it should be, but for this. Sin in some form or other is responsible ultimately for all the ills of human life, and this is apparent enough even in the language of those who deny the fact. Sin and selfishness, covering as many units as there are in the human race—the fundamental problem of society is to get rid of sin. This would open the way for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

CHAPTER III.

INTELLECTUAL AND RELIGIOUS UNREST.

MEN have run up against some awkward facts. Awkward in the sense that it has meant, for many, a modification, and in some instances a complete reversal, of previous ideas. The microscope and telescope between them have given us a universe more marvellous than anything the ancients dreamed of. As the machine has literally changed the face of industrial society, so have the microscope and telescope between them revolutionised our modes of thought. After patient investigation in one field after another, we are coming to see that what is required of us is nothing less than the reconstruction of our schemes of the universe in accord with the facts. Incidentally this means, for many, painful struggle and searchings of heart. With the world's problems indefinitely enlarged by the accumulated data, the most sagacious of men have been sorely put to it to see their way through the maze. Everything, it is seen, is linked together by cause and effect; everything, it seems, determined beforehand by a chain of antecedent conditions. There is no escape from the universal Reign of Law; and under the general law man's life and actions, achievements and aspirations, come equally with the rest.

A new element has entered into the situation.

Positions which a generation ago were met and faced by scholars are being popularised in periodicals to-day for the benefit of the man in the street. The man in the street is under a double handicap: he is without either the data or the qualifications necessary to enable him to resolve the questions for himself; and his guides, should they possess both, are not always interested in resolving the questions in harmony with former cherished beliefs. No wonder, therefore, if the man in the street does not know what to make of things; no wonder if there seems to be a veritable landslide, as respects religious matters, on the part of the general mass. This, with the social question combined, will be found to be responsible for the wild and foolish talk so often heard. If in the popular mind the emphasis is placed almost wholly on environment, the sequence is natural. And if the idea that man is the creature of his circumstances, the product of forces over which he has no control, is in some quarters coming to be received for gospel, we need not be surprised.

It is not difficult to sympathise with the intellectual confusion which has overtaken men. It would be gratuitous to say that it is confined to the uneducated mass. The intellectual question has been raised in the minds of educated and uneducated alike; and not a few earnest-minded and well-disposed persons in and out of the church are sorely put to it to adjust their thought to the new conditions. In the case of many the question is probably given up as a hopeless task, and the order of the day is—drift. Under these circumstances it is a matter of the most serious concern that the ministry should be in a posi-

tion to take incontestably modern ground in their preaching; for otherwise, to many, the message will seem to be unreal, out of joint with conditions which they otherwise know or believe to be true. We need not, however, suppose, because there is this widespread unrest, that the foundations of the world are giving way. The present painful uncertainty—in high quarters and in low—is but a temporary phase and will pass away.

As in the case of the social unrest, there is also a deeper interpretation of the prevailing intellectual and religious unrest. At bottom the unrest in the latter respect is due to the demand of the human mind for ultimate truth. You cannot thrust anything you like down people's throats—you must have facts in support of what you say. When the exact facts were not known, in times gone by, statements might pass on authority; but other times are come, and no statement can be accepted on mere authority to-day. The human mind demands the warrant of truth. We must know the facts for ourselves, as far as possible, and build up our conclusions accordingly as facts are within our reach. Hence the call for first-hand investigation in all fields.

In John Wesley's time *materia medica* was in a bad way. Medical science was *non est*. It was a matter largely of guesswork; so men were bled to death and drugged to death. To-day we understand things better. In this and other departments we are building up conclusions on the basis of ascertained results. Bacteriology has put us in the way of arriving at a true theory of disease. Historical studies follow the same general lines. Everything is submitted to the test.

Nothing is spared. We must get at our sources, and estimate their relative value, since only in this way can we assure ourselves that we are standing on solid ground, and rely on results, and not spending our labor in vain. Formerly it was sufficient to start with a conclusion and go in search of facts in support; to-day, presuppositions are ruled out, and conclusions follow the facts.

Nor is this eager spirit of inquiry, with its exacting requirements, inimical to faith. We ought to know the grounds of our beliefs, and be ready to give answer when required. Bible positions are not true because they are bible positions; but they are bible positions because they are true. The rigorous inquiry going on in all directions is in no sense occasion for alarm. On the contrary, it is a tribute to the earnestness subsisting amid all the frivolity of the times. The scientific method is here to stay. It is the outcome of the human mind's craving for truth. We do not want to accept things which are not true. Its application in the realm of Holy Writ is just what was to be looked for, and is to be welcomed. It compels candor in thinking; sifts the chaff from the wheat; establishes the truth; and enlarges men's conceptions of God. It is part of the fulfilment of the larger promise of Christ that we should know the truth, and the truth should make us free.

Religious unrest, then, is the direct outcome of antecedent conditions, and just what was to be expected. But religion is permanent, however men's attitude towards religion may change. Men can no more get away from religion than they can from their own shadow. They must worship something, if only a

Superior Man. It is part of their nature, wrought into their innermost being, in nowise established or disestablished by Act of Parliament. The bitter things said, sometimes, are said under misconception of the real question at issue. Nothing is clearer than that no charge can be laid against religion, in the Christian sense—it is against the want of it. Unchristianity is a failure. Christianity on the world scale has never been tried.

Religious unrest is no new thing, nor peculiar to any one age. There was unrest enough when Galileo came out with his famous discoveries. If the microscope has involved a like readjustment of thought with that brought about by the telescope, it is not to be wondered at. In each case we have the satisfaction of knowing that we are building on sure foundations in securing verifiable results.

The early centuries furnish a parallel to the present unrest. Discussion was rife, fierce discussion, *pro* and *con*, with respect to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, carried on for years; striving to come at a common understanding, and to formulate a statement that should embody this understanding in common terms. It took centuries to accomplish; but the work was done, although the last word was not said till the sixth century, if it was said then.

Men are unsettled because they are in doubt what to believe. But the essentials of religion are few. The way to get more light is to live up to the light you have! We are all too ready to find excuses for not doing what we know. This is the method of Jesus—he that willeth to do His will, he shall know. Do what you know, and you shall know what to do! First

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things first. He that is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much. Whosoever hath, to him shall be given. One grows enthusiastic over the words of Jesus, wherever met with. They stand the test. They hang together every time.

One explanation of the unrest is to be found in the fact that the new wine of Christianity often breaks through the old skins. That is not the fault of the wine. It is the fault of the skins. What are wanted are new skins. If the new cloth tears away from the old garment, that is not the fault of the cloth, but the garment. What is wanted is a new set of clothes. The needs of one age do not answer for another. We must fit our theories to the facts. If the waters of life are constantly finding fresh channels, that is what they are designed to do. All of Christianity is not within the Church. The Kingdom embodies itself in new forms, as Christianity breaks out in new directions, even if it fails of recognition. In one way or another God's immutable will that earth shall be like heaven is to be, and is certain to be, brought to pass.

Two points remain on which something may be said to clear up possible difficulties. The first point touches the question, Why does not God see that His will is done? The answer is that God is doing His best to get it done. Does that sound strange? There are men who belong to a union. Without knowing any secrets one may hazard an opinion. If one man should get up and want to run his fellows—whether scores, hundreds or thousands—even supposing he were right and they were wrong, he would be likely to have an uncomfortable time! Exactly! Why? Because men are men, and men are not in line. The difficulty is

to get them into line, when there are as many different wills as there are men. Any public speaker knows the difficulty of getting men to act. This is precisely God's difficulty. He has to work through human agency to accomplish His will. His will on earth can only be carried out in human affairs through men; and God can go only as fast and as far as men will follow.

The second point respects the present industrial order. There is an idea abroad in the minds of men, tacitly held, if not expressed, and that not by any means by the workingman only, that the industrial era is part of the eternal order of things, established from the beginning. Under this idea it is not unnatural that some men, in fighting the present order, should think they are also fighting God. The corrective is easily supplied. The present industrial and social order is a modern growth, and is not destined to last forever. Thus much at least we may venture that is absolutely unassailable. The ghastly records with which we are only too familiar are not to be perpetuated indefinitely. It may bring a shock to some, but the industrial order, as we know it, is destined to pass away, by slower or swifter stages, and yield to something better. This surely ought not to be other than an inspiration, even though it be true that we have no scheme to offer, and do not know anyone who has, that is workable. It ought to be an inspiration, inasmuch as it sights in the distance the coming of the Kingdom of God!

To know that conditions, as we know them, are not to be fastened on mankind forever; that they are no part of the eternal order of things; but that they are

a development, and a very modern development, which we will outgrow, as we have outgrown other developments in the past—all this, surely, it will be recognised, has some practical bearing on religion. Through all changes, past and present, religion continues to survive, and is destined to survive. Despite reactionary tendencies, answering to the eddies and backwaters of life, progress, substantial progress, is made, as the deeper currents of life carry men on towards the ultimate end. Every fresh advance made is both an instalment and a stage towards the full realisation of the Kingdom of God.

Lastly, for the Christian, the fact that such a prayer was ever uttered, or commanded to be uttered, by the Lord Jesus Christ, is absolute evidence that the Kingdom will come. Our Lord never uttered, and never caused to be uttered, a futile prayer! Last of all beings would He be to mock the sacred aspirations of the race, which in their origination derive from Him. This would be to deny Himself. It was the apprehension of our Lord's meaning, touching the transformation of earth, which inspired the vision of the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband; and this vision, projected into the future, as part of the Consummation, forever constitutes a vital element in the indying glory of the Christian Hope. "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth!" Even so, Lord Jesus, let it come!

CHAPTER IV.

THE HUMANIZING (AND DIVINISING) OF EARTHLY CONDITIONS.

SUPPOSE we could eliminate the trouble which comes to man through his own faults—his own carelessness, heartlessness, intemperance, greed, perfidy, and the whole category of vice and crime—his own sin—on what basis may we clear the Almighty from implication in the age-long struggle still going on? It is clear we cannot separate the present from the past, and what it entails. Sin has been a factor from the first. But the individual cries out, in presence of the unavoidable limitations in human knowledge, How can we justify the ways of God with men? This is, indeed, a burning question with many. Can we still regard God as the fountain of Beneficence, not as respects the far-off consummation of some glorious world process, at present in the making, and seen as abstracted from the individual—

“Some far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves”—

but as respects the individual, in his own interest, at any given stage in his history? Granted that the will of God carried into effect and applied to human affairs all round is the remedy, what can be said as to the Kingdom of God in the process of Becoming? How, in other words, assuming the Will of God to

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mean the good of each and the good of all, can it be made to work?

We must take the situation as it exists to-day, with all its complicated conditions and tangled relations. The question is, How can we find our way through the maze and hold to our faith in God?

For, admittedly, supposing we could rule sin out of the question, we should still have to consider the possible tragedies incidental to man's limitations. There is no reason to suppose, for instance, that, assuming we had a sinless world to-day, we could wholly eliminate the possibility of accident, in some form or other. We could not guarantee absolute immunity from railroad accidents—for we are dealing here with what are commonly, though perhaps erroneously, called brute forces, without intelligence, as well as the human factor—unless either mankind were to give up railroads, and go back to the waggon stage; or we could guarantee at one and the same time the perfection of material, the perfection of workmanship, and the perfection of knowledge, over and above the perfection of climatic and other natural conditions. With increased mechanism, and multiplied power, comes increased and multiplied risk, offset, in part, by increased and multiplied vigilance.

If we went back to waggons, could we absolutely eliminate the possibility of child or man being caught between the wheels?

Further, leaving the shore and betaking ourselves to the sea, could we guarantee there would be no shipwrecks, supposing that we could insure that our coasts were properly lighted and safeguarded? Is it not plain that storms are not within the power of man,

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and that, take what precautions he could, in crossing the seas he would still have to face the possibility of having to pay toll to the watery deep? Is it not a foregone conclusion that insurance societies would still be called to exist to cover the risks of ships that would still be wrecked?

Again, we cannot time earthquakes; and, although we might learn to build approximately quakeproof houses, we could never be absolutely certain that we might not, some time or other, be exposed to some awful convulsion of nature of a Krakatoan kind. Again, explosions and fires, on a larger or smaller scale, would be almost certain to occur, despite the utmost human ingenuity and human care, despite of safety lamps and fire preventives, however reduced to a minimum—not to mention the thousand and one odd individual accidents that would daily occur throughout the world. It is asking too much of human nature at our present stage to require that we should know all knowledge, and be immune from all possibilities of mistake, even supposing we could rule out sin; and it would be a fatal handicap to human development if we should require that human nature ran no risks. We are left, therefore, face to face with the possibility of human tragedy still in a world without sin.

The tragedy would be enormously lessened. Accidents due to dissipation and vitiated powers would obtain no more. The whole record of the drink traffic in its world-wide ramifications, direct and indirect, would be wiped out. Tragedies due to scamped work and general dishonesty would be forever eliminated. And, of course, all wilful hurt of man to man, whe-

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ther as regards crime or war, would be a thing of the past. Moreover, with common-sense and good-will applied to the affairs of men, health would be the normal thing. Yet this would not guarantee that there would not be a failure in crops, and consequent suffering, in some parts of the world; at least during the transition stage, until the world, broadly speaking, should be gotten under one common directing control; bound together by steel ribbons, as well as bridged by ocean ferries, fitted out with wireless telegraphy, all parts co-ordinated to the service of all. This would mean a re-organized world, socially and politically; and how long that would take to work out, with the best of intentions on the part of all concerned, no one knows; for different races are in different stages of world development, and with the best will imaginable you cannot shorten centuries of experience of a race into a matter of days. This is another factor to be taken into account.

Nevertheless, when everything is allowed for, it may confidently be said, whatever the conditions might be, were the Will of God done on earth it would meet all the contingencies in the case, and do away with human ills. It would do this not only in a perfect world to begin with, but also in a world in the process of becoming; do it, moreover, in a world that has heretofore passed, or is still passing, under a reign of sin. For the Will of God embodied in human affairs is the absolute corrective which men in various ways are seeking, sometimes blindly, to realise.

For let us make it plain. Under the Reign of God each man would stand committed to do his uttermost for his fellow-man, who would be to him his brother:

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and each race would stand committed to do its uttermost for every other race. In the event of any mischance overtaking a man, under the sway of the Kingdom of God, willing hearts and willing hands would be at once at his service to do all that could be done; the utmost skill would be immediately available; and there would be no occasion for anxiety concerning his family, because their proper care would be an understood thing. The sting would be taken out of death and the pang out of pain, and it could not be said, under these conditions, that the inevitable incidents of human life and human limitations were irremediable human ills. In event of want in one part of the world, another part would be there to the rescue, as is the case to-day, only with a will and readiness that is now unknown. Nor would the ameliorative work, however humane and necessary, be counted sufficient. Wise by experience, the world would be mapped out afresh, by those responsible, as respects both what to grow and where to grow it. Common-sense would be applied to the world's affairs without opposition on the part of those who had position or power, and there would be no inclination to take advantage of the situation at others' expense.

Were the Reign of God taken in earnest, then, it would not do away with the need of human application in all departments of life. Human brain and human resourcefulness would still be required, in grappling with human conditions, and turning the resources of nature to account. The Elysian ideal of some that in a world free from sin all that would be required would be to sit each man under his own vine and fig tree, and let the fruit drop into his mouth, is

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puerile. There would be need of hard work and close application to solve the problems of a world such as we are acquainted with, only minus sin. Human knowledge and experience would still be a matter of growth, and we should still have to learn by our mistakes, even when it was the normal state of things to grow in stature, and in wisdom, and in favor with God and man.

Leaving these generalities and coming to the individual standpoint, the question to be settled is, What principle, given existing conditions, would at one and the same time serve both the individual and the general good? What principle, in short, is operative for good, under the Reign of God, whether as respects heaven or earth? The obvious but expressive answer is, simply, Love. Some people term this kindness, to get away from hampering associations; some speak of it as altruism, to bring in the idea of "others." Love is both kindness and altruism, but it is much more; and nothing else can be put in its place.

To this day, it may safely be affirmed, Love, notwithstanding we have the word constantly on our lips, is but little understood by the Christian world, or by mankind in general. In many cases it is thought of as simply fondness. It is very commonly identified with some state of the feelings; that is, some emotional condition is taken, or mistaken, for a guiding and governing principle of action. Love as the actual outgoing of self to another, love as literal self-expression for another's good, is rarely thought of. Love is not so much a feeling as an attitude. In its wide sense and practical bearings it can hardly be said to have

been taken seriously by the Christian world. Hence the ghastly unreality of much of our religious profession, making our states and feelings do duty for genuine Christian experience. How common it is to listen, for instance, to a man giving his religious experience, apparently with deep emotion, who is nevertheless known to be excessively egoistic, destitute of any thoroughgoing sense of the obligation of self-giving; who, perhaps, will be only too likely to call up the very imp, if he cannot have his own sweet way! How common it is to hear a man pray, seemingly with great unction, who only after great effort can be induced to contribute to any needy cause, and who will spend, and persist in spending, more money, say, on tobacco, or something equally hurtful or wasteful, than he gives to the whole work of God.

Self-giving, the outgoing of self to another in the most thoroughgoing fashion,—who among the religionists understands this to be the true heart and soul of Love? We sing the sublimest hymns, and make the most awful protestations of our devotion; solemnly affirm our desire to be drawn nearer to the cross; use pietistic language in prayer; approach the Lord's table with religious regularity, and take upon ourselves the most binding vows that were ever laid on mortal soul; and we do all this with alacrity, with a cheerful heart, without mis-giving! But to suggest that we consider in a thoroughgoing manner our neighbor's welfare, in our personal arrangements, as we consider our own, would simply cause us to start! And yet that is precisely the second commandment in the law, upon which, and

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upon which only, so far as man is concerned, the whole superstructure of the Kingdom can be built. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Love, as a governing principle, is competent to solve all the ills of man; and no other is. Until it is adopted by the Christian world, in the everyday matters of life, the world's problems will go unsolved. It is fully competent to meet all the needs in the case, in an imperfect stage of development, such as we have to-day, while the Kingdom is in process of becoming,—where even God's people are not free from sin,—as in a state of perfection, which we usually associate in thought with the conception of heaven. For it must be admitted that, allowing for rare individualities, we are far from perfect in the Christian world, the most earnest of us. Yet, despite of temperamental and other defects, which earnest men and women might still have; despite of occasional, though non-intentional, departures from the perfect law; it would still hold good that, under the general application of the principle of love, it would be practicable to set up the Kingdom of God on abiding foundations in the world, and make its sway coterminous with the race.

Love, then, is the solution, the key to the position—the outgoing of self to another. It is both the key and the solution, the means and the end, in one. Love, where it exists, will find a solution. "Where there's a will there's a way." Love alone will not avail to bring a fire escape to a burning building; but love can be relied on to find ways and means of getting it there. Love is inventive as well as considerate and kind. Love cannot prevent accidents; but it can use

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means to lessen them, and learn by experience. Love cannot guarantee the rainfall; but it can set in motion the activities necessary to bring new areas under cultivation, and apply new remedies, as well as go to the help of those in need. Vested interests do not stand in the way of love. Love will not spend millions on frivolities any more than it will give consent to indiscriminate charity. On the contrary, it would lose no time in shutting down on both, in this age; and instead would co-ordinate our charities and simplify our life. It would unify our churches. Love would not, and could not, destroy personal distinctions, for love is open-eyed; men would still have temperamental differences and range under different categories, in the nature of things; but love is essentially human, and would humanise all relations. Love permits, and requires, the full expression of individual personality. Who would care who was boss, if love ruled? Yes, we would all care; we would want the best man to be boss, and would see to it that he was boss, for the good of all!

Whenever anything in this practical fashion is hinted at with respect to the broad application of love in the affairs of the world, knowing men are apt to shake their heads, and if politeness prevent them from saying so, it does not hinder their having inward misgivings as to the complete *compos mentis* of the individual making such a suggestion. Not practical, mutters the said knowing one, *sotto voce*. This is a practical world! Exactly! It is just on this account that the suggestion is made. The contention is, that love is practical; that it is the only practical thing in a world of human beings; that all other sub-

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stitutes are foredoomed to failure; and that the Lord Jesus Christ is personal guarantee of its unfailing efficaciousness to meet all the needs in the case! It is the nature of love to give itself; to meet every contingency; to rise to sacrifice, if need be; and to die. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

The contention is, that as increasing bodies of Christians seize this fundamental position, we shall approximate more and more to the sway of the divine rule. A sort of paralysis is on the heart of the church because she has failed to grasp the full meaning of her Lord's remedy. True, it is His remedy; but supposing it were otherwise, and that He had chosen any other remedy—nothing else would have done. Oh, yes, love is practical. The difficulty is, we are not practical. We estimate things according to the values of days and years, instead of centuries; we deliberately turn away from the greater to choose the lesser good, and then plume ourselves on our superior prudence. The Will of God applied to life throughout its entire range is extremely practical. Love puts us in the way of finding remedies. In itself it does not supply either knowledge or other requirements, but it can and does put us in the way of getting them supplied. It provides the necessary atmosphere for human action. Love is resourceful. If at any given moment it be without the ways and means, it can be depended on to discover or devise both. Love is unconquerable. God is Love.

It is here that we find ourselves compelled to part company with dreamers. Those dear good souls, on the one hand, who abstract themselves from the hard

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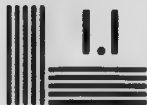
facts of life, and offer pious prayers for God to assuage human woes, without using their own endeavors to bring their desires to pass, are rightly denominated unpractical. It will be found that, at bottom, they are afflicted with a sort of religious self-centredness. It is so much easier to roll the burden on the Lord, especially if we are comfortable ourselves, than to give ourselves to others, and get out and do the rough work. *Per contra*, the dreamers of another category, whose remedy consists in assaults on the existing régime, to be followed by the substitution of the state for the individual, and whose dreams lead nowhither, are equally unpractical. For scientific schemes, without the active and ever-present principle of love, if they do not come to naught, will very likely land us somewhere other than in Utopia, and very possibly on the rocks!

A sympathetic mind can readily understand the fervor of intensity with which the new-found gospel is proclaimed to-day from the very housetops, as the solvent for human ills, in which it is tacitly assumed that machinery in the body politic will run itself. But, on reflection, it is seen to be a gospel without dynamic. Earnest souls are drawn to it, as it seems to offer a quick way out of the awful jungle; earnest minds, without the deeper sympathies, are impressed with the iron logic, and the apparent trend of cosmic forces; but it remains true, nevertheless, that it is foreordained from the foundation of the world, by the nature of things, the nature of human society—by human nature, in short—that such a gospel should fail. Nothing can be done to good account in this world without self-giving, and self-giving is love.



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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This is the divine dynamic. Science is needed; science to the uttermost will be employed; but science without love is like machinery without power—it won't go. Love, however obscured, in its early beginnings, created society. Love, in its ideal perfection, will respond to society's needs.

As things are, then, how is the Will of God to obtain in human affairs? It does not take long to give an answer. Evidently, only by a change of attitude on the part of individual men. Which can be expressed in one single significant word—Conversion—into which all the meaning may be compressed that is desired. It needs regenerated men to make a regenerated world. Hence the prayer put into human lips, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth!

CHAPTER V.

THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD.

WHEN we come to read the Old Testament, regarded as a vehicle of revelation, in the fuller light of the New, the question immediately arises, unless we have been otherwise instructed,—Has God always been the same? Or has He changed? Has He always been what we believe Him to be? If not, if God has not changed,—it seems a very awkward question,—how are we to explain the past?

This question was once put by the writer to a bible class, when dealing, in the regular course, with the story of Gideon, after some months of teaching. To his great joy he was to get his reward. The class did not think God had changed, but not knowing exactly where the question was going to lead, showed some hesitancy when the matter was pressed. Then followed the further inquiry,—How, then, if God has not changed, can you explain Gideon's idea of God? In a moment came the answer from one who, like his namesake of old (for his name was Peter), was on this occasion to be spokesman for the rest: That was Gideon's part. Peter, in a moment of revelation, had sensed the truth! For truth it was, indubitable, unshakable. Strange as it may seem to first thought, with the Old Testament before us, God has always been what Christ represented Him to be, and always

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will be, from eternity to eternity. When I was a child, I thought as a child, said Paul, and this is true of the race. God does not change; but man's conception of God changes. The Christian conception of God, which sees the long line of religious development culminate in Christ,—sees God in Christ,—and thenceforth interprets God in terms of Christlikeness, simply seeks to recognise this superlative truth (James i. 17; Heb. xiii. 8; cf. II. Cor. v. 19; Heb. i. 1; John xiv. 9; x. 30, etc.).

The Christ conception of God, and the Christian conception of God, are not quite the same thing. The one is the source of the other, but the two are not one. A new element is introduced into the progressiveness of revelation, in the Christian dispensation, by the fact that the one is continually being taken up into the thought of the other. In this connection the parable of the Master, as to the old garment and the new cloth, the old skins and the new wine, is of perpetual application. For the new truth is continually requiring new receptacles, and the growing thoughts of men must continually clothe themselves in fresh forms.

We must, however, be careful not to confuse things, or misplace values. We have this treasure in earthen vessels (II. Cor. iv. 7); but the vessel is not the treasure. The vessel merely gives it individual form, but the treasure is the truth, which, however modified by time or circumstance, in itself is universal, formless, infinite, and so the common heritage of all the sons of men. Man cannot dispense with his forms of thought, as we have seen, if he is to think at all; and if he is to organise his thought into more or less

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coherent wholes, he must have his makeshift systems, which change with the changing times, as he continues to gain in his apprehension of the ultimate reality. But that Reality is abiding, changeless:

“Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

So then, whether in the old or the new dispensation, we must distinguish between the clothes and the thing, the vessel and the truth. We must grasp the mighty truth that we are in a universe of God's own creating, which exists, and can exist, only in God, and for God (Rom. xi. 36; cf. Acts xvii. 28; Heb. ii. 10, etc.). In this universe nothing is or can be unrelated; all things are in relation, and are held in relation by the divine existence, and there are no isolated facts; the very relations constitute the things. Increasing knowledge simply has to do with increasing discoveries of relations. Thus it is a needs-be that the local and universal, the human and divine, are in constant inter-relation; and the human, minus sin, is simply the outworking of the divine. In his individual existence as personality, capable of transcending the local and grasping the universal, man is essentially godlike, a veritable image of God, and has been so regarded from of old (Gen. i. 26, 27).

Looking back into the past of human history, one thing seems to stand out clear, in the survival of the highest forms,—hard saying though it may seem to some,—and that is, the continuous agency of the

Spirit guiding into all the truth. For proof of this fact we have the indubitable testimony of the ages. Either this, or we must resolve everything, at a stroke, as the pure contrivance of chance, and thus multiply a billionfold the difficulty of explanation, or rather, cut up by the roots and absolutely destroy all possible means of explanation; that is, render explanation impossible. For the human mind can then have no reliance on the validity of its own processes, and the net result is the overthrow of the mind itself in a mass of irretrievable ruins. Chaos has taken the place of Order as the supreme fact of existence, which is simply mental suicide. As regards the *testimonium seculorum*, take the human factors alone, and how can we explain the evolving of order out of the chaos of conflicting ideas? It is unintelligible. Left to themselves, with their partial and imperfect views, it would seem that men would deviate more and more to all possible extremes, which, indeed, the study of history tends to show has been the case. For error is simply deviation. But He who knows the way, and is the Way, is at the same time guarantee that these devious paths shall at length be brought to the ultimate goal marked out in the Will of God. In man's being there is a deeper law than he himself is often aware of, dependent on no human volition, which he cannot evade, which enters as a silent force into all he says and does, shaping his volitions, and offering an effective check to ultimate disintegration. Such is the infallible *testimonium seculorum*.

Worthy conceptions of God belong, of right, to the Christian, as the heir of the ages. The one postulate

of all right thinking is that God is (Heb. xi. 6). Not a dummy God, sitting by, having no vital connection with His Own universe. Nor a God incapable of thinking and planning and carrying out His ends. Nor a God abstracted from the hurly-burly of life. Nor any other conception, or misconception, of the divine, immanent in all things; but an active Energy, ever working, in the beginning, now and evermore; projecting, foreseeing, guiding, shaping: higher than our thoughts, back of our plans; bearing with our infirmities, ever waiting, with unshaken confidence, for his late-born sons to catch the thought and purpose of the Eternal, till they, too, shall apprehend for themselves the part they are called upon to play in their call to be fellow-workers with God (I. Cor. iii. 9; cf. vi. 7). He sees the whole drama of existence—the struggle, the pain, the suffering, the sin—and is undeterred. That which causes the stoutest hearts, among men, in their partial views of existence, to quail, does not disturb God, Who sees the end from the beginning, Who sees life clearly, and sees it whole; albeit He, too, shares—paradox though it seem—in the suffering. He goes sublimely on with unruffled serenity, with a Peace unutterable, eternal, which it is impossible for mortal man to compass in his thought, but which it is nevertheless permitted mortal man to share (Acts xx. 24; cf. John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Phil. iv. 7, etc.). His purpose, the Purpose of the Ages (Eph. iii. 11), remains forever unshaken. Closer to us than we are to ourselves; often leading us when we think we are going our own way (Isa. x. 7; cf. John xv. 15); overcoming our blunders (Rom. viii. 28; cf. Ps. lxxvi. 10); undoing our follies; shaping events;

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through us and through all things He is ever working to the one end, ever leading to the ultimate goal. It is given to man to catch glimpses here and there of the sublime reach of the Cosmic Mind, as here and there the truth breaks in on some more favored soul; and from age to age the heart of man is renewed in the faith of a Providence that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will, of a Power, not ourselves, which makes for everlasting righteousness.

The Christian conception of God frankly recognises the truth that one age prepares the way for another; one age grows out of another. First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. There is no waste or loss in the economy of God. Even the death of one generation contributes to the life and well-being of another. Under the divine superintendence, all things are made to work together for good. Growth everywhere is the law of God, by assimilation and rejection, thus preserving vital continuity with the past (Mark iv. 28; cf. John xii. 24; iv. 37; Rom. viii. 28, etc.). If in each age changed conditions require men to reshape their thought, it is simply in response to the law of growth. Men are not stones. Their conceptions grow, and are destined to grow, forever, since the human partakes of the nature of the divine (II. Peter i. 4). There is no putting back the hand of Time; no living the past over again. To attempt to place the living present under the dead hand of the past is to do what is simply futile, suicidal, and can result only in self-stultification.

The conception of God's grand Purpose,—which assumed definite shape in the thoughts of the Apostle Paul,—takes in the whole cycle of time, and the

whole sentient creation (Eph. iii. 11; i. 4; cf. Rom. viii. 19-22). Originating in the mind of God before the foundation of the world, absolutely independent of all human volition, it is nevertheless to be carried on, and carried out, through human wills (Rom. viii. 29, *et seq.*; cf. ix. 16, ff.). That purpose, which, in its vastness, taxes the utmost human thought to grasp, cannot fail, for God is in it. Neither has it failed, at any point in the process, albeit again and again seemingly frustrated by the sins and follies of men. Such is the mystery of godliness, as well as the mystery of iniquity, that the very wrongs of men are made to fulfil the divine ends (Gal. vi. 7; Ezek. xi. 21; cf. Isa. x. 7; Rom. iii. 5, *et seq.*). This being so, we may well gather fresh heart of hope, as we take up again the early vision of the Parousia of our Lord, changed though the Oriental imagery must needs be, for us, in connection with the coming Consummation (James v. 8; II. Pet. iii. 4; I. Cor. i. 7, etc.; cf. Rom. viii. 19; Rev. xxi. 1, *et seq.*; II. Pet. iii. 13, etc.). Such a glorious Purpose, so vast, so far-reaching in its scope,—which it is the office of a gracious evangel to proclaim,—such a glorious Consummation floods life with a new glory.

The question will often recur to the reflecting mind, in comparing the actual history of the Christian dispensation with the Christian revelation, How could Christian men decree one another to death? Whence the meaning of the fires of persecution? How could it be that gentle souls, touched with tender compassion, could, nevertheless, acquiesce in others' torments? The answer, perhaps, is not as far to seek as it seems. It has been said that men will risk any-

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thing for their women and their gods. There are some things more valued than life. A man will not willingly suffer any to do violence to his religious convictions any more than he will willingly stand aside and see the sanctities of his home outraged. The claims of Lares and Penates are held to be paramount, and inviolate, and brook no rebuff, and no one can invade the sanctities with impunity. It sometimes happens that convictions held to be sacred in one age are found to be no longer tenable in another. The earliest exponents of the new point of view will be likely to meet with scant consideration at the hands of those to whom the old order still appeals, and who have failed to understand that the old order changeth, giving place to the new.

Now, when it concerns matters of the deepest import, in which a man's most cherished hopes are thought to be involved; and when, further, it becomes a case, as it seems, of loosening the bonds, and undermining the foundations, of society; no wonder if men with strong convictions are stirred to resort to extremest measures, and feel themselves obligated, in the sight of God, to do so (John xvi. 2; cf. Acts xxvi. 9). This general view must be taken in conjunction with the general immaturity of outlook of earlier times; for our more moderate attitude of to-day, so far as it is genuine, the result of conviction and not the effect of unconcern, is due to the actual working of the Christian leaven in the thoughts and hearts of men.

When clothes and things are confounded, forms and truth, there is no knowing what may happen. When the new seems to bode a total subversion of

things, upsetting established ideas and established ways, which have served well in other times; disturbing the external continuity, and threatening general dislocation; when it impinges on what is regarded as sacred and final, undermining men's faith, which is more to them than life, the spring of all their energy for good; when the next world is affected, as it seems, as well as this, and the vision which has buoyed men up through all the stress and storm of life is rudely assailed; then the men of the old order take alarm. By torture and death, if need be, and the terror they inspire, they seek to abate the danger, reclaim the erring, and prevent others from going astray, while diligently using their utmost efforts to preserve the *status quo*, which to them is the one and only assured way of Salvation.

For the sake of the interests at stake, therefore, beyond words to express, earnest men in past times have been willing to resort to sternest measures. And if they had been correct in their estimate they would have been justified in their act. But external continuity is not the continuity of the Spirit, and when engaged in striving to preserve the one, they may actually choking the other. The one infallible test of a man's integrity is his personal attitude toward the living truth, not external conformity to formulas and creeds, however needful for ecclesiastical economy. This is the rock on which religionists have always split; the occasion for the stoning of the prophets, to which Jesus drew attention (Matt. xxiii. 29, *et seq.*; cf. Luke xi. 47, ff.); and the very ground on which Jesus Himself suffered at the hands of His contemporaries. For, alas, when the letter is wor-

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shipped, other motives conjoin with regard for the supposed interests of God; and to human limitations requires to be added human perversity, human sin!

It is a mistake, however, to assume that the errors connected with any specific religious propaganda are of set purpose embraced as errors in the first instance. That would be to reduce human nature to worse than imbecility. Very likely, in the first instance, what turns out to be error was embraced for truth, and perhaps was truth, or truth overstrained,—for there is a gradual process in error as well as in its antithesis. Every significant heresy stands for some significant truth, and has been held for a sacred possession on that account; as every significant institution has come into being and endures by reason of the service it renders, or is believed to render, and in spite of the defects. When the relation between truth and error, service and disservice, becomes outrageously disproportionate; when the equilibrium is so disturbed that the resulting condition of things approximates to that of an inverted pyramid, the fall is not far off; but then, as we know, mass can stand a very large angle of obliquity, proportionate to the mass, before overturning. Thus may we understand the persistence of propagandas and the permanence of institutions which in some minds offer perplexing problems, and which it is thought in some manner reflect on the honor and majesty of God.

No more awful calamity can befall a man than the inability to distinguish between error and truth, between right and wrong, as result of persistent refusal to see; no more awful judgment, in cultivating the habit of self-sophistication, than to succeed, and so

to come to embrace a lie for the truth! This is the condition against which the prophets did not fail to warn; which the Apostle Paul elaborated; and to which Jesus recurred again and again (Matt. vi. 23; Mark iii. 29; Matt. xv. 14; John ix. 41; xii. 36-40; iii. 19; Rom. i. 24, 25; cf. Isa. vi. 9, 10; xlv. 20; Jer. xiii. 25, etc.). Pharaoh is a classic illustration, at one end of the scale, of obliquity of vision followed by hardening of heart; at the other end, we have the conclaves of the Sanhedrin, sitting as an assembly of the priests of God, solemnly decreeing the Son of God to death! A man self-blinded has placed himself beyond help of God or man! (Luke xi. 15-26; cf. xiii. 34, 35; Heb. vi. 4-8; x. 26-31.)

As intimately bearing on the question of human limitations, it may be noted that man seems constitutionally unable to grasp more than one truth at a time, and this only by degrees. The oft-quoted saying of Newton's as to the child gathering pebbles on the beach while the ocean lies before serves to exemplify this fact. Whole generations are used up in gathering together a few grains, while infinitude stretches beyond. A proper understanding of this should teach us all humility. By focusing the attention of centuries we come to rest tolerably assured that nothing material has been overlooked, on a given point, and to feel measurably satisfied as to the validity of our beliefs in consequence. We observe, in the process, how truth is a corrective to truth, or rather to error; how truth coalesces with truth, all truth, and is thereby known for truth; how one arc of the infinite circle mates with another; and by this means we come to gain confidence both in the sub-

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jective processes of human thought, and the objective reality of what is believed. In the light of this, the course of Christian thought no longer seems to be a conflict of irreconcilable contrarieties, but rather a sublime demonstration, on the large scale, of the guiding of the Spirit, informing and illuminating, in fulfilment of the ancient promise.

For, wonderful to tell, the Church starts out, as a Christian ecclesia, with no external authority, no power but the power of the keys, a purely spiritual discipline, with which to constrain men into thinking and acting in one way. Into her bosom she receives men of diverse minds, with diverse training—heathen, pagan, Jew, Greek; wise, simple; bond, free; and the miracle of the ages is seen in their assimilation to one spirit and one faith. There is little need to fear for the future when this is the story of the past. For the waters of life, by almighty decree, can be observed to be flowing far and near; renewing, if not covering, the earth; refusing to be stayed; bringing healing to the nations; overflowing old channels, overleaping all barriers, spreading everywhere, vivifying and spiritualising the whole domain of life.

The desire for finality is human, and many attempts have been made in time past to embody the Christian conception in fixed and final forms, but without avail, for reasons inherent in the nature of the case. In vain, on every such occasion, do men of the old order protest; the men of the new order are equally constrained to insist that new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. We can sympathise with the desire for finality in view of the deep-seated human need to think in static terms. To such desire, how-

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ever, much of past controversy, born of misunderstanding, has been due. It is easy to see one side of a shield; yet it is not only possible, but inevitable, that a shield should have two sides. Either party to a controversy may be right, or both wrong, and yet be at the same time members of the same household of faith, if we only had sufficient comprehension to take in the two sides at once. To find that, combatants here, they were nevertheless equally inspired by concern for the truth, were each, in turn, from his point of view, measurably right, will doubtless be not the least of the joys which await earnest minds when this mortal shall have put on immortality, in the presence of the Lord. Meanwhile, it is gratifying to know that, if new wineskins are needed, the wine is the same in all the ages, ever new and ever old; sweet to the taste, the Elixir of Life. Men find truly that it maketh glad the heart, and may with clear conscience put this bottle to the lips of the thirsty and dying, with the comfortable assurance that to drink is to live! (Matt. ix. 7; John iv. 14; cf. Matt. iii. 12).

The Spirit of Guidance is no less in evidence in the winnowing of the chaff than in the garnering of the grain. There is need of criticism, as a purging process, in Christian thought, lest hay and stubble be put into the building whose foundation and corner-stone is Christ (I. Cor. iii. 10-13; cf. Eph. ii. 20). Little as it may be imagined, conceptions are constantly introduced into their thinking by many who specially plume themselves on being ultra-evangelical, which, did they but know it, derive from a source far other than they suspect, and far removed from Christ. Ancient dualism between matter and spirit, and the

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systematic belittling of the body and its functions, are no less pagan elements when incorporated in the teaching of regeneration, than when, by a strange irony, their advocates, with pious horror, discover the like or similar vagaries in the views of the monks! If good John Wesley, according to his times, could speak of hell as liquid flames without any sense of incongruity, there is perhaps less warrant to do so to-day. Pious men might once entertain conceptions of God consonant with the idea of an immature paternalism, with an overfondness for the rod, not perhaps realising that they were creating their gods in their own image; but the times of this ignorance God mercifully winked at. When, again, we see Christians in conventions, systematically segregating themselves from the world, and tending to identify religion with pleasurable associations rather than actual contact with their fellows, we may at once supply the corrective by recognising that a true revival always brings us back to the world. If the Bible is persistently confounded with the Word, we can at least afford to possess our souls in patience: knowing that the scriptures, if not absolutely inerrant, nevertheless contain the whole truth necessary to salvation, and we are under no necessity to lose the Word in the words. Happy indeed is the man who has discovered that the living Spirit and the living Word are One!

And so we come back to the starting-point, to Unity. Just as light is one, with rays radiating in all directions, but still everywhere one in nature, so is God One, and filleth all things (Eph. i. 23). We try to formulate some conceptions of His perfec-

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tions, but find bounds to our thoughts and our ability to express them. It is one and the same God Who is worshipped in all the communions of Christendom, notwithstanding the shibboleths which from time to time have divided Christendom, in the attempt to define the divine. It is still the function of the living Church, avoiding the fetish of verbalism, and holding to the everlasting truth, to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. iv. 3).

What share individuals have in shaping the mind of the Church it may be difficult to determine with accuracy. We must not attribute to them too much, but should probably regard them rather as exponents of tendencies than originators. They inherit, in common with their contemporaries, all that has come down from former times, and come under the influence of the times in which they live. There is, however, demonstrably, a spiritual succession, by spiritual contact, and only in this way can spiritual life, precursor to spiritual thought, derive. This has already been indicated in another place, but will bear repeating. Saul comes in vital contact with the brother at Damascus, as well as with Barnabas, and they with others, and all with Christ. Basil is brought face to face with his sister's influence; Augustine hears Ambrose, and is followed by his mother's prayers. Luther is reached in his convent cell by voices from the past, as well as by the living voice of Staupitz, the vicar-general. Wesley meets the followers of Zinzendorf; and Zinzendorf, on his part, receives a vital impulse through the medium of the brush of some artist soul who has left his message on canvas. Bunyan listens to some poor women; Spurgeon to an unknown local preacher;

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Booth to an American evangelist. So the succession goes, not by digital contact, but by spiritual touch. What the individual receives (I. Cor. iv. 7), he passes on, with his own humble contribution added thereto, which, perchance, may be nothing more than seeing his way through conflicting positions, and articulating his thought with more or less coherence for his fellows. We are thankful for an Augustine's emphasis on grace, and a Luther's emphasis on faith; both enforced afresh and fused in the emphasis laid on personal experience at a later date, when the Wesleys were abroad; and again embodied in the present-day emphasised call to personal service at large.

If we speak of history repeating itself it is so only figuratively, and in appearance. There are seeming repetitions, and actual parallels, in the progress of Christian thought, but not absolute identities any more than in life. The process is continuous and progressive. Temporary obscurations and reactions, when overcome, do not leave issues as they were; something has been gained as well as lost, if only clearer insight into human limitations. The angle of vision, at any rate, has been changed, be it ever so little, and therefore with the whole proportion of things. Perennial freshness attends on the Infinite, and truth earnestly sought after ever wears a fair and winsome face. Truth and Christ are One.

Thus the unfolding of Christ in the minds of men is in close relation with the forming of Christ in their hearts (Gal. iv. 19). To Him we go as the ultimate Authority. Yet not to any Christ under human limitations, for, with the apostle, we know Christ no more after the flesh (II. Cor. v. 16). The humiliation, doubtless, is part of the process of Redemption, but

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we must take post- and not pre-pentecostal views. The apostles, as our earliest exponents of the Christ mind, saw and handled, but their faith at length broke through the bondage of the Seen into the liberty of the Unseen; hence their unconquerable energy and all-prevailing persuasiveness, as their gaze is held no longer by what can be incarnated in a mortal form, but by the boundlessness and almightiness of the divine, manifested in a living, risen and exalted Christ. Truly as Athanasius saw, any Saviour less than this could not hold the homage of men, and would not be equal to the work of saving a world.

Therefore, when we go back to Christ it must be with the enlarged vision of anointed eyes. With the prophets, we, too, must take up the Messianic outlook; as also with the apostles, we, too, must come under the full influence of that Life which was the Light of the World; and with the thoughts of both we must co-ordinate our own. Their views necessarily differ according to their different angles of vision. If as yet the time was not come, for the apostles, for the proper systematising of thought, theirs at least to have anointed eyes to see, and tongues to speak, to set forth, under sure Inspiration, the Truth of which they were cognisant, touching the supreme Revelation of God made flesh (I. Tim. iii. 16; cf. John i. 14, etc.). To later times must needs be left the duty of formulating the truth which each successive age has made its own. Reason, scripture, experience, in their widest interpretation: intuitional and rational, amplit and explicit, tests, must in due course and in all thoroughness be applied to the faith received. So shall the Christian consciousness be enabled to keep pace with the Christian credo, and the Christian credo with the Christian consciousness.